

AN EXPOSITION

GENERAL RULES

OF

The Methodist Episcopal Church.

BY REV WALTER KNOX.

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PREFACE.

Wishing to impress upon the people of my own charge their obligations to observe the General Rules of our Church, I prepared a course of lectures—five in number—to be delivered at such times as should be deemed most appropriate. It occurred to me that it might be well to write these lectures out more fully, and publish them, in consecutive numbers, in the SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE. In doing this, they were, contrary to my original intention, amplified into sixteen, forming the basis of as many lectures or sermons. As an evidence that this kind of preaching did not interfere with the spiritual well-being of the Church, it has been followed by one of the most gracious revivals of religion I remember ever to have seen.

At the Macon District Conference, held in Hayneville, July 26th to the 30th, 1871, the following resolution was offered by Rev. W. C. BASS, of Wesleyan Female College, and unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That as the readers of the SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, we have been much edified by the recent articles which appeared in its columns expository of our General Rules of the Church, by Rev. WALTER KNOX, and that we believe the interests of Methodism will be largely promoted by embodying those articles in tract or pamphlet form for circulation among the people, and that he be requested to have them thus embodied.

Profoundly grateful to the mover of that resolution, and the members of that Conference, universally, I now offer these articles in the “*form*” desired. At the suggestion of a friend I have retained the same division into numbers, but have enlarged at some some points, so as to make two numbers of the first one, and thus to have seventeen instead of sixteen, as published in the ADVOCATE.

May the GREAT HEAD of the Church make these feeble, but well-meant efforts, promotive of HIS glory, and of the good of HIS people.

THE AUTHOR.

Darien, Ga., January 1st, 1878.

THE GENERAL RULES.

NUMBER I.

THE GENERAL RULES—THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THEIR OBLIGATION.

I propose to discuss in several consecutive numbers, "The General Rules of Our Church," with special reference to the nature and extent of their obligations.

These rules were set forth by Mr. Wesley, very nearly as we find them, for the government of those societies which he himself had formed—not outside of the Church of which he was a member, for separation from that Church was, at the time, the furthest thing from his intention—but outside of the ordinary services of that Church. They were adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church in this country, and subsequently by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and they are considered binding upon all its membership.

But whence, it may be pertinently asked, do they derive their authority? or why are we under obligations to observe them? I answer unhesitatingly, that they are not binding upon the conscience because of their having been put forth by Mr. Wesley, or any other uninspired man; or because of their being found in our Book of Discipline, to the requisitions of which we are voluntarily pledged to conform; or because of their adoption by our highest ecclesiastical authority, for the regulation of the lives and conduct of our

Church members—but because, and only because of their conformity with the teachings of the Scriptures of eternal truth.

It is a fundamental principle of Protestant Christianity—and these rules, as we shall see after awhile, fully recognize the principle—that “the Bible is the rule, the only and sufficient rule, both of our faith and our practice, so that whatsoever is not taught therein or deducible therefrom, is not binding upon the conscience of any man, either as a doctrine to be believed, or as a duty to be performed.” These General Rules, therefore, and the doctrines and principles of all Churches, must be subjected to this test. They bind, and *can* bind the conscience only as they obtain the sanction, and to the extent only to which they obtain the sanction of the Holy Scriptures.

I will remark, also, for in this connection the remark is an important one, that while “no Scripture is of any private interpretation,” yet in the final issue every man must determine for himself its meaning, and, consequently, the nature and extent of his duties and obligations. No man or body of men, no ecclesiastical tribunal whatever, can become the keeper or keepers of his conscience. It will be understood that I am speaking here—not of those regulations which a Church is authorized to make for the purpose of sustaining its own internal policy, and of carrying into effect the great interest committed to it, and which all the members of that Church should feel conscience bound to observe—but of those principles which are designed to influence and control the moral conduct.

The view I have taken is fully corroborated by the Apostle Paul: 1 Cor. vii., 10–12. It was in reference to a question of morals, that he said:

“I command, yet not *I*, but the *Lord* ;” and again : “To the rest speak *I*, and not the Lord.” Here he clearly distinguishes between the utterances of the Divine inspiration to him, or through him, and his own opinions and observations. In the former instance he regarded the obligation as that from which there is absolutely no escape ; in the latter, he considered the direction, however important in itself, not as positively authoritative, but at most as advisory.

These things being premised, it is easy to evade the force of a very common, and at the same time a very damaging, objection to the economy of Wesleyan Methodism. The members of other Churches have sometimes looked upon these General Rules, as being exceedingly oppressive, and have greatly pitied those who, as they reasoned, were brought under special obligations to keep them ; and some of the members of our own Church, have considered some of these rules as altogether over-strict, and have sighed for the liberty which they suppose is found in those Churches not so strict in their requirements, and where a wider license is granted in respect of some things.

Now let us consider this for a moment. These rules are of moral force, and impose upon us moral obligations, only as they are in conformity with the Sacred Scriptures. If there is not such conformity, they are not binding upon us any more than they are upon others ; but if there is such conformity—if it can be shown that these rules are but expressions of the will of God, as revealed in the written word, they are certainly binding upon us ; but, at the same time let it be carefully noted, they are equally binding upon the members of other Churches—of all Churches—unless, forsooth, it can be made to appear that the mem-

bers of other churches are not under the same obligations to comply with the requisitions of Sacred Scripture, as we are. The fact of their being printed in our Book of Discipline gives them no authority, nor does it deprive them of their authority. The simple circumstance of their being recognized as "the General Rules of the Methodist Church" or Churches, does not increase our obligations to observe them, nor does it, nor can it make these obligations less. (If, and I here make this strong point, they are in accordance with the Scriptures of Divine truth, they are, from the very nature of things, binding, and equally binding upon all who take the Bible for their guide! Let not, then, the members of other Churches waste their sympathies on us; for in this aspect of the question, *they* are as *we*, and *we* are as *they*!) Let not the members of our Church be dissatisfied, but let them remember that an escape from our Church into another is not an escape from the *stringency*, or what they may regard as the stringency, of these rules, provided, of course, these rules, as it is my purpose to show, are in harmony with "the only and the sufficient rule." And furthermore, while any Church may well tremble at the idea of attempting to lay heavier burdens upon its membership than the word of God imposes, or of requiring more in a moral point of view than the Sacred Scriptures require, it should stand utterly aghast at the thought of requiring less—of licensing its members to do what God's holy word prohibits!

The object of our present investigation, let it be clearly understood, is not to discuss "the General Rules" in every point of view in which they might be presented, but simply to consider their conformity, or want of conformity, with Sacred Scripture. Hence, when such conformity is at

once obvious, I shall do little more than quote the passage, or passages, which show it; and thus leave more room for the discussion of those rules in reference to which the Scriptural authority is not so apparent. I shall endeavor to be impartial. I will not knowingly warp the rule so as to make it conform to the Scriptures, nor will I bend the Scriptures to bring them into harmony with the rule.

NUMBER II.

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE—TAKING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN—THE SABBATH—DRUNKENNESS.

The keeping of these rules is presented as "the evidence of a desire for salvation." The evidence is distributed into three classes: 1. The things forbidden; 2. The duties enjoined, and, 3. The ordinances of God.

1. It is expected of all who desire salvation, to continue to give evidence of that desire, "*by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced.*"

Whatever may be said of this general principle, it cannot be urged that it is at variance with the Divine teaching. The Apostle Paul stated it more strongly. He taught we should not only "do no harm," and "avoid evil of every kind," but that we should "abstain from the very appearance of evil,"—that we should not only avoid that which is itself an evil, but that also which has the semblance of wrong doing. If there is, therefore, any error, it is one of *defect*, rather than of excess.

In scanning the list of evils included in this general class, it is to be observed that there is no mention of the grosser immoralities or sins, *crimes* in the eye of the common law; as the violations of the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth commandments of the Decalogue; because, perhaps, they are too palpably vices, *crimes*, to be put into a list of this character; or, perhaps, because they are elsewhere and better provided for. It is observable also that not all the evils belonging to this general class are enumerated. This is obvious,

from the use of the phrase, “such as.” Let none, therefore, make the mistake of supposing that because an evil—as, for instance, *dram-selling*—is not especially mentioned, it is not therefore included.

“*The taking of the name of God in vain.*”

This is but a brief reiteration of the third commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”—Ex. xx., 7 The Lord would have all to reverence His holy name. The habit which some have of profane swearing, of interlarding their conversation and speeches with oaths and execrations, of using too freely and without proper reverence any of the names of God, in common conversation, in prayer, or in preaching, is worse than an idle and a useless one—it is a grievous sin against the moral law of God, as set forth in the above quoted commandment, and in other places in His holy word.

The *name* of God, which in our present English version of the Scriptures is translated LORD, and which, for the purpose of distinction, is printed, as here, in small capitals, was, among the Jewish people, the *ineffable name*. From a misapprehension of the true meaning of the third commandment, or from a superstitious dread of incurring the penalty of its violation, this sacred *tetro grammaton*, or mystic term of four letters, ceased to be spoken by them. Consequently, its proper pronunciation, and most probably its true meaning, were lost. Biblical interpreters generally render it *Jehovah*—a noun derived from the *present* of the third person, singular, of the verb *to be*, and which literally signifies *He who is*, or the *Self-existent One*. A Jew, however, renders it *Yahveh*, or *Yehveh*, deriving it from the *future* of the

third person, singular, of an *obsolete* form of the verb *to be*, which being literally interpreted, signifies *He who will be*, or taking the verb *to be* in all its original amplitude, *He who will come*, or the *Coming One*. Now as this last term, or its Greek equivalent, *Ho erkomonoo*, is, in the New Testament, more than once applied to our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for *He was* then, *is now*, and, while time lasts, *will be* the glorious *Coming One*—and as it beautifully intensifies the idea that the *Yahveh* of the Old Testament is the *Christ* of the New—I am very much inclined to accept it as the true rendering of this highly important and impressively significant name.

The Jews, in ceasing to pronounce this name, carried their superstitions vastly too far; for in losing its real pronounciation, and with it, its proper meaning, all the succeeding generations of man have experienced an irreparable, an ever-felt, and an ever to be regretted loss. The opposite of this conduct of the Jews is the *frequent* and *irreverent* use of the name, or of any of the names of the High and Holy One “who inhabiteth eternity.” The expressions, “*O Lord!*” “*My God!*” “*Great God!*” “*Good Heavens!*” “*Merciful Father!*” “*O Christ!*” etc., when spoken in common conversation, in public declamations, and even in prayer and preaching, as mere *expletives*, or without proper reverence for the Great Being whose name or names are thus freely used, are positive violations of the commandment “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain,” and those who thus employ them will not be held *guiltless* in His holy sight.

I have a sort of an indistinct recollection of an anecdote of a little boy, who in speaking of a sermon he had just heard, said, in his own childish way, “I liked the sermon very well—but the

preacher *cursed so much.*" Who would say that the little boy's moral sense was wrong, or who would have had it otherwise? I have myself been shocked more than once in the same way. If it is a habit, it is a most objectionable one, and should be at once corrected.

Of all vices, swearing is perhaps the most unprofitable. He who indulges it makes nothing by it. He does not even gain the poor recompense of being more fully believed. Indeed, persons generally suspect the correctness of a man's assertions, when he himself intimates a doubt by giving this *unneeded* and *unrequired* confirmation of them. Besides all this, our Lord and His inspired Apostle, James, put the impropriety, the *sinfulness* of all such practices beyond the possibility of doubt. The one said—"Ye have heard it said by them of old, thou shalt not foreswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black: but let your communications be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil:" Matt. v., 33, 37 The other said, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not: neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your *yea* be *yea*, and your *nay*, *nay* lest ye fall in to condemnation:" James, v., 12.

One of the articles of our religion—the twenty-fifth—as set forth in the Book of Discipline, may very properly be quoted: "As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James, His Apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion

doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so that it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in "justice, judgment, and truth." While I subscribe heartily to all this, I cannot but think that the frequent calls upon men to swear, in the name of God, and "upon the Holy Evangelist," in open court, and especially on less solemn occasions, have a tendency to weaken human integrity, and to deteriorate, in a fearful degree, public morals.

The name of the Great God who made us and all things, should ever be held as sacred by us. I could not but admire the man, moral, though not professedly a Christian, who had such a reverence for the house of God as never to pass one without taking off his hat; so I cannot but feel inwardly drawn toward a person who uses sparingly the name, or any of the names of the Supreme Being, or pauses when he has occasion to use it, or otherwise shows the profound reverence with which he utters it. Call it superstition, if you will but it is vastly better than the *free, bold, irreverent* use of any of the appellations of our triune God.

"The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein, or by buying or selling."

Here we have a less comprehensive declaration than the fourth commandment, as the two instances given are not, as I apprehend, the only ways of "profaning the day of the Lord." If the rule errs at all, it is certainly not by requiring too much; and its conformity with sacred Scripture, as far as it goes, cannot be doubted for a moment.

The institution of the Sabbath, as a day of *sanc-tity* and *rest*, seems to have been coeval with the creation or formation of man, although we find

no positive precept requiring its observance, until the giving of the law from Sinai's mountain. It is not, however, first mentioned in the Decalogue. God had peculiarly signalized it by sending no manna on that day, giving a double portion on the sixth. The people were positively forbidden to seek the manna on the seventh day; and His anger was kindled against some who sought but found none. From the way in which the Sabbath is here mentioned, it does not appear that it was then instituted. The reason given for its observance in the fourth commandment, carries it back as an institution to the time when "God did *rest* from all His works," and *hallowed* and *blest* the day of His rest.

The question is a *curious* one—perhaps, it may be said, more *curious* than *profitable*—and yet, it is one that cannot but be suggested: Was *omnipotence* itself wearied, fatigued, by the mighty efforts which it had put forth in creating and moulding the materials of this terraqueous globe, and in imparting life on so large a scale, so that rest actually became desirable? The *Elohim*, the *Mighty God*, is represented as hallowing this day, just as a human being, tired, well nigh exhausted by his labors, could hail the hour of rest! Was *rest* actually needed, and so much needed as to make it welcome, as to cause the Almighty himself to hail it with joy? We dare not say that it was; and we are compelled to consider the representation as an intensive way of giving to man an idea of the magnitude of the works of creation, and of intensifying the blessedness of that *rest* of which the Sabbath was and is, the appropriate symbol. Viewed in this light, how much more brightly appears the Apostolic declaration—"There remaineth, therefore, a *rest*"—literally, a *keeping of the Sabbaths*—"to the people of God!" And with

what new interest, with how much greater impressiveness, do the Sabbath and its observance appeal to the strongest feelings of our nature! In close connection with this, we shall find presently another strongly appealing motive, in the Sabbath as the ever-continuing type of the resurrection of the precious Redeemer of fallen man.

The law of the Sabbath, as contained in the Decalogue, is of two-fold requirement. The day was to be kept "holy," and it was to be observed as a day of "rest;" and as subservient to both of these requisitions, the "six" intermediate days were to be appropriated to labor. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." Nothing was to be left undone for the Sabbath; for "In it thou shalt not do *any* work." Nor was the restriction confined to the man himself, but it extended to all over whom or over which he had control. He was not only not to do any work himself, but he was not to allow it to be done upon his premises: "*Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger within thy gates:*" Ex. xx., 10.

From the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures generally, and especially from the teachings and example of the blessed Saviour, we find that works of *piety*, or the labor requisite in attending upon the worship of God, and the ordinances of His house, works of *benevolence*, as the ministering to the diseased and the suffering, works of *necessity*, or labor absolutely necessary to be performed, and that too, on the Sabbath, are allowable, and not only *allowable*, but actually required of us. A caution just here comes well in place. We must be careful not to *create* a necessity, and then plead it as an excuse for not keeping the commandment. We are just as much bound to *prepare* for the

Sabbath, to *plan* and *work* for the Sabbath, as we are to keep it when it comes. If, therefore, what is pleaded as a necessity could have been avoided by a prudent foresight, by antecedent preparation and labor, the plea we set up, so far from being a justification of our conduct, is an aggravation of our guilt.

Our Lord, as also His Disciples, during His stay on earth, strictly observed the Jewish Sabbath; but after His resurrection and ascension into Heaven, the Sabbath was changed from the *seventh* to the *first* day of the week, because, “on this glad day” He arose in deathless triumph from the grave. Although nowhere positively so expressed, this change was doubtless by Divine authority. The Apostles possessed no right to make it, nor can we suppose them capable of having attempted it. The Jewish part of the Disciples may for awhile have kept both days to some extent; but we know that the early Christians did meet, and meet, too, for religious services, on the first day of the week; and that the seventh day soon ceased to be kept by them as the Sabbath. The Sabbath originally had reference to the *rest* which succeeded the six days’ work of creation; but it now refers us also, and especially, to the glorious *rest* which will succeed the new creation; for

“On this glad day a brighter scene
Of glory was displayed,
By God, the Eternal Son, than when
The universe was made.”

But, it may be asked, were the duties and obligations in respect of the Holy Sabbath, modified and to any extent, done away, as was the case in respect of some other parts of the moral law? I answer, it is altogether unwarrantable to suppose that our Lord did, in any instance, or to any extent, *change*, *repeal* or *annul* the moral law as con-

tained in the ten commandments. He did remove the erroneous conceptions which the Jews had formed, or which had come down to them through the uncertain channels of traditions, and give the true, spiritual import of several of the commandments. This, however, was not to contract or narrow down, but to deepen and widen their true meaning. So, also, in respect of the Sabbath. He made no change as to the nature and extent of its obligations. The change of the day, while it affected nothing else, confirmed it in all the fullness of its requirements; and the Christians of every age are just as much bound to observe it as were the Israelites of old, to whom the commandment was first given.

The blessed Saviour, in saying—"Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man," gave a deeper insight into its nature and design, its proper spiritual meaning and application. If it be not allowable to attend the public worship of God, because it requires *labor*, and all *labor* is forbidden by the commandment—if a man must lie and suffer all day, because relief cannot be brought to him without *labor*, and *labor* is not to be performed on the Sabbath, according to the notions of those Jews who so bitterly opposed the Lord and Saviour—if a fence which a storm has thrown down, thus exposing the growing crop to the incursions of marauding herds and flocks, is not to be put up on the Sabbath day, because it would involve *labor*, and *labor* is not allowable on the Sabbath, then the Sabbath would be *against*, and not *for* man; would be an *injury* to him and not a *benefit*. In the last instance it is implied that the fence has been recently overthrown, that the exposure of his fields is not the result of carelessness or indolence. The *necessity*, however, is the same. If his fence is down from the want of

proper diligence and forethought, the sin consists, not in his putting up the fence, and thus protecting his corn or other produce from what is destroying it, but in not planning and arranging, and making proper preparations for the Sabbath, in being disobedient to that part of the commandment which teaches—“*Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.*”

God not only *rested* on the Sabbath day, but He *hallowed* it, and we are not only to desist from “doing ordinary work therein,” but we are to devote it to God and His service. The commandment is—“Remember the Sabbath day to *keep it holy.*” It is not the time for the indulgence of our own thoughts, for the speaking of our own words, or for the doing of our own work. It is to be employed in reading God’s word, in meditating upon His goodness and various other perfections, in attending His service, in promoting His glory, and in advancing, by various means, His interests in the world, as also, our own spiritual well-being and happiness.

“*Drunkenness, or drinking spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity.*”

In so far as it regards the first part of this rule there can be no difference of opinion. The Bible clearly, strongly, forbids drunkenness, informing us that “no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.” No one doubts that drunkenness is a sin, dark, loathsome, ruinous. The latter part of the rule, however, requires consideration.

“*Spirituous liquors, or distilled spirits,* were not known when the Bible was written, and hence are not mentioned in the Scriptures. We read of “*strong drink;*” but we have not the means of ascertaining what that was. Most probably it was a *strong wine*, or some other *fermented liquor*,

calculated to produce intoxication or drunkenness. *Wine* itself is spoken of in both a good and a bad sense. It is recommended under certain circumstances; and again we are cautioned not to "look upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup," from the consideration, that "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder:" Prov. xxiii., 31, 32. Possibly there was a wine, like our domestic wine, both innocent and refreshing, while there was another, whose use, at any rate, whose free use, was interdicted.

"Spirituous liquors" have been productive of so many and such wide-spread evils, that their habitual use can scarcely be looked upon as in harmony with the teachings of God's word. This, I think, can be shown. As, however, I design the argument to be elaborate, exhaustive, sufficiently so, at least, as to remove all reasonable doubt, it cannot be entered upon here. It must be deferred for the next number.

NUMBER III.

DRINKING SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS—BITTERS—DRAM-SELLING.

I am now engaged to discuss the question, whether or not that part of the General Rule which forbids “the drinking of spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity,” is in conformity with the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures.

Let us meet this question fairly, and examine it in the light of divine truth, and in the fear of God; for I am not mistaken when I present it as a question of overwhelming importance, and involving interest as wide and far reaching as eternity itself.

In the absence of any direct Bible precept on the subject, it is allowable for us—indeed, it is required of us—to seek by implication, inference, analogy, to ascertain the divine will concerning it. It will be conceded, for, if not, I have no controversy with one so unfair as not to make the concession, that a violation of a principle of the Sacred Scriptures is a violation of the Scriptures which set forth that principle. Let us, therefore, educe some such principle, seek its meaning, and make the proper application—a principle, too, which will be of great use to us, in other instances, as well as in the present.

The Apostle Paul said: “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend”—literally to *stumble*, that is to do wrong—“I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” 1 Cor. viii., 13. The *meat* here spoken of, as is evident from the context, was that which had been offered to idols. The Apostle, with his clear

discrimination of things not necessarily connected, could have eaten such meats, without reference to the idol, but with thankfulness of heart to God for His unspeakable gifts. There were those, however, who could not. These weaker brethren, seeing him eating, would be emboldened to eat also; but being incapable of making the necessary discrimination, would have done it, "with conscience of the idol," and consequently, been guilty of idolatry. Thus the Apostle's eating meat would have caused "his brother to offend"—to be guilty of idolatry; and he came to the conclusion, that he would "eat no meat." He would not do that which, with entire impunity, he might do, lest another, in attempting to follow his example, might stumble and fall.

This is the principle; and the application is easy. Let us suppose, my brother, who in your practice, if not theory, advocate "the drinking of spirituous liquors," in other than "cases of necessity," that you can drink habitually, freely, without becoming intoxicated, or being in any way injured by it—the supposition is scarcely possible, but we will make it for the sake of the argument—yet you cannot but know that there are hundreds, thousands, and Church members as well as others, who cannot do it. With them, however it may be with you, moderate dram-drinking is the highway to drunkenness, and will, just as certainly as they pursue it, end in a drunkard's wretchedness, and a drunkard's grave. If, with this knowledge, you continue the practice of dram-drinking, so that others, emboldened by your example—by your success, if you prefer the term—shall venture to do so, but in the attempt stumble and fall, how can you be esteemed guiltless in the sight of God? Will you "destroy with your *drinks*" those for whom Christ died?" Ask not,

Cain-like, the question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" For, be you well assured that your brother's blood will cry from the ground unto the Lord Almighty; and unless by some means you repent and obtain forgiveness, his murdered ghost—not according to the notion of the idly superstitious, but in truthfulness and fearfulness, will haunt you forever and forever. Resolve, therefore, as, in like circumstances, the Apostle did: "Wherefore, if drinking spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity, make my brother to offend, I will drink no more spirituous liquors while the world standeth; lest I make my brother to offend." I see not how any one can free himself from the hug of this argument; and if its legitimacy be allowed, the rule is placed, beyond all question, on a Scriptural basis.

Although the further elaboration of this question would seem to be a work of supererogation, yet, as I promised to make the argument an exhaustive one, and as what may convince one mind may have no such effect upon another, I will place the subject in another point of view. The Holy Scriptures require us to do no harm. This needs no proof. Now the moderate dram-drinker, even if he does not himself yield to intoxication, nevertheless does harm—I had almost said infinite harm, but I will say, harm beyond the utmost powers of our conception.

He does *harm* to himself. Some writer, it matters not who, for his words carry along with them the conviction of their truth, in discussing the question: "Which is most destructive to life, drunkenness or moderate drinking?" says, "A man may get as drunk as some do once a month, vomit out the poison, sleep off the effects, and be sober all the month, drinking nothing till the fit comes on again. Such a man may do more busi-

ness, do it better, preserve better health, and live longer than the moderate drinker, who never gets drunk, never vomits out the poison, but keeps it within him, adding a little to it daily, till it undermines his constitution, so that he readily falls a prey to all manner of diseases, without vitality enough to recover from them. He dies a moderate drinker, never suspected of intemperance, much less ranked among the drunkards, yet losing his life in consequence of his moderate drinking. Scientific and experienced physicians entertain these views, and are of opinion that more than half of those who die in consequence of drinking alcoholic liquors die before they become confirmed and downright drunkards."

The moderate dram-drinker is doing harm to himself, in that he is periling everything, even his own soul's salvation, upon the uncertainty of overcoming where thousands have fallen. No one intentionally becomes a drunkard. Take the very worst case you can find, one who wallows yonder in the street, or lies along the road side. Time was when he was a sober young man. When he began to sip from the maddening wine-cup, or quaff the flowing bowl, he had no thought of becoming a drunkard. On the contrary, he looked with utter loathing upon the poor inebriate, and felt that he would rather die than become like him. But he was even then putting himself in the way. Along this way he went at first slowly, irregularly, and then with accelerated speed, until he is now found wallowing in his filth, and foaming out his shame, while "beyond the bounds of time and sense," there would seem to await him naught but the "blackness of darkness forever!" Oh! is it not the very height of folly, does it not involve a fearful degree of moral turpitude, for a man, with his eyes open, and his senses all

awake, to adventure in ~~the~~ course which may lead to such disastrous results.

But waiving these considerations ~~which have~~ respect to the harm done to self, as it is well nigh impossible to convince those most concerned, of the truth of the one, or that they are exposed to the peril contemplated in the other, let us turn our attention to the harm done to others. I here take the position, that moderate dram-drinking is more injurious to the morals of the young, leads more of them astray, and has a more deleterious influence upon society in general, than even drunkenness itself. If this can be established, the last remaining doubt concerning the scripturalness of the "General Rule" on this subject will vanish like mists before the rising sun.

Let us seek an illustration which at the same time will have all the force of proof. I see yonder a dangerous bog; thousands have attempted to cross it; and a few have succeeded. The larger number, however, have fallen, and fallen to rise no more. If all who ever made the venture had perished, if no exempt cases were known, the danger would be less to others; for there would be found scarcely any bold enough, or rash enough, to hazard the experiment. But the success of a few inspires confidence in others. The young man of vigorous constitution and of athletic frame, strong, at least, in his own self-confidence, is ready to exclaim: "Whatever any other has done, I can do." What though he sees all around the sad wrecks of those who have perished there, their uncovered and bleaching bones giving innumerable warnings against the perilous undertaking; yet there are a few who stand firm, and walk erect, or who have reached the other side, in seeming safety. and he is assured that he too can do it! On he goes; but not possessing

the strength or presence of mind of those whom he took for his guides and exemplars, he misses his footsteps, and falls, adding another to the number of those who have perished in that fatal enterprise!

Now for the application: There is something in drunkenness so repulsive, so exceedingly loathsome, that if all moderate drinking had ended in it, if all who ever sipped the inebriating draught had hastened on with rapid strides to the drunkard's fate, if no exceptional cases had ever been known, few indeed, if any, would have the temerity to venture there. They would be as reluctant to put the maddening cup to their lips and gulp down its burning contents, as they would be to drink the fatal bowl of hemlock which Socrates was made to drink. The fact, however, that some few—and how should the three letters—F E W—like boding characters, emitting their fiery glow at the very gate of entrance, warn the rash youth as he raises to his lips the brimming cup, to dash it to the ground, and fly for safety where only safety can be found—the fact that a few have habitually used spirituous liquors without any such results, induces others to follow the pernicious example—those who otherwise would not have done it, but who not possessing the same mastery over their appetites and passions, sooner or later fall by the way, and are lost and ruined forever.

The following judicious thoughts flow from I know not what source: "The time comes when a young man must go forth into the world to seek his fortune, as his father before him sought his. He goes from a home where has been under a father's watchful eye, and guarded by a mother's anxious care. He goes into the harsh and bustling world, to mix in the busy haunts of men, to

encounter temptations new and hitherto undreamed of. Now, indeed, it requires all the force of his early training to keep him spotless. His bark is in the rapids, and unless piloted by strong principles, and wafted by the breezes of true moral courage, it cannot escape the rocks and shoals that surround it on every side. He sees his companions, his employers, 'shall I add, members of the Christian Church,' to whom he looks for example, all indulging in the so-called moderate use of alcohol in its numerous forms, and is daily urged to join in just one glass. For some time he firmly resists; but seeing that his conduct is marked and singular, that he is even held in less esteem on account of his abstinence, and from a desire to please, he wavers. Oh! then we can imagine that two spiritual beings are near him, one on the right hand, and one on the left. On the right, he is reminded of his distant home, and all that was taught him there; on the left, the old tale of the delights of companionship, and the harmlessness of an occasional glass. He still wavers—yields. The first glass is taken, and a silent tear is dropped on his right hand; a loud laugh—a laugh of devilish triumph goes up on the left, and thus the worm enters. The first glass drunk, the slippery downward path is commenced. So steep is the declivity that the walk soon becomes a run, until losing his foothold, the unfortunate youth plunges headlong into the murky sea of dissipation, forgetting his God, his early training, and his once-loved friends—father, mother, brother, sister, friends, fortune, all are sacrificed to the one dreadful passion. The worm has done its work, it has pierced the heart of the tree. Angels weep over another lost soul, and hell resounds with acclamations of praise of its most successful recruiting officer—the Demon of Intemperance."

Before dismissing this particular subject I ought perhaps to say at least a few words in reference to the various "Bitters," with which, if I may be allowed the figure, the country has been well nigh flooded. Of these I make two exceptions: "Sanford's Liver Invigorator" and "Walker's Vinegar Bitters," I believe to be valuable medicines. At any rate, they are not *beverages*; for the former is about as unpleasant to the taste as sweetened aloes, if you can imagine anything so bitter as capable of being sweetened; and the latter is as unpalatable as we might suppose that lager beer, very heavily spiced with *quinine* would be. There is no danger of these two being taken, unless in cases of necessity. Of the others, in so far as my knowledge extends, whatever else may be said of them, it must be said that they are pleasant drinks, with scarcely enough of the "*bitter*" to justify their name. It is to be feared that many an unfortunate sufferer, grasping at everything which gives the least promise of relief, has imbibed from these mixtures the taste for intoxicating drinks, and has become hopelessly the victim of intemperance; and, however valuable these "bitters" may be as medicines, the benefits resulting do not compensate for the evils done.

In the General Rule, there is no mention of dram-selling. This, however, need cause no difficulty. The only question is, "Is it an evil?" Does the dram-seller do harm? If so, it is clearly comprised in the "such as;" and what is more to the purpose, as I am looking higher than the "General Rules," for authority, it is at variance with the principles of the Bible. And is not dram-selling an evil? Is not the grog-seller doing harm? No one knows better than himself, that while he is subjecting himself to the "woe" pronounced against him who "giveth his neighbor

drink, who putteth his bottle to him, and maketh him drunk:" Hab. ii., 13—he is doing harm on a large and fearful scale, is scattering fire-brands far and wide, is sucking up the very life-blood of society, is destroying the peace of thousands, is sending desolation and blight into many a once happy family circle, is taking the means of a comfortable living from the broken-hearted wife, and the bread from the mouths of hungry children, is filling the country with paupers, and the jails and penitentiaries with their unfortunate inmates, is giving the gallows its victims, and is furnishing hell with a large proportion of its human population. Oh! talk not of the want of law to reach a case like this! Name not the disciple of the blessed Jesus, whose whole life was spent in doing good, in the same breath with the whisky, the rum, or brandy-seller. Apply not the epithet of grog-seller to the Christian. A Christian dram-seller would be, indeed, a monstrous absurdity; for while a mere *church member* may, a *Christian* cannot be, the vender of "spirituous liquors," except for medical or other necessary purposes.

If any apology were needed for the length of this article, I would give it in the words of a lady who was considered a monomaniac on the subject of temperance:

"Go, see what I have seen,
Behold the strong man bow,
With gnashing teeth, lips bathed in blood,
A cold and livid brow;
Go, catch his withering glance and see
There mirrored his soul's misery.

"Go, hear, and feel, and see, and know
All that my soul hath felt and known;
Then look upon the wine cup's glow,
See if its beauties can atone—
Think, if its flavor you will try,
When all proclaims, 'tis drink and die."

NUMBER IV

FIGHTING AND SMUGGLING—USURY—UNCHARITABLE
OR UNPROFITABLE CONVERSATION—THE “GOLDEN
RULE.”

“Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother, returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, the use of many words in buying or selling.”

With the exception of the last clause, this rule is expressed in almost the identical words of the Scriptures; and we have nothing to do here but to inquire into the scripturalness of this last clause—“the using many words in buying or selling.”

This part of the rule is simply in accordance with a principle of common honesty. If a man who desires to do right, has anything to sell, he will ask a reasonable price only, or what in view of the circumstances, he is willing to sell it for; and if he wishes to purchase an article, he is willing to pay for it what it is worth, or what, all things considered, he is able or willing to pay for it; in either case there need not be “many words” about it. Whenever these “many words” are used, either the seller desires to get more for an article than it is really worth, or the buyer desires to get it for less than its actual value; and in both instances there is an attempt of the one to obtain some undue advantage over the other. These “many words” therefore, come of evil, and are repugnant to scriptural honesty.

“ The buying or selling goods which have not paid the duty.”

The “duty” is the tax or tariff laid on goods by government, for the purpose of defraying its expenses, or of carrying into effect its various objects. Government is entitled to support, must, indeed, be supported. The smuggling in of goods so as to avoid the payment of this “duty” is to cheat the government out of that much; and, upon the principle that the receiver of stolen goods, knowing them to have been stolen, is as bad as the thief, he who buys or sells these smuggled goods, aware of their being smuggled, is as bad as he who smuggles them. Now, it is just as wrong in principle to cheat the government, as it is to cheat an individual, and cheating, we know, is a violation of the plainest teachings of the Bible.

“ The giving or taking things on usury, i. e. unlawful interest.”

As I am not attempting to force a conformity of the General Rules with the Sacred Scriptures, but am seeking only to ascertain whether or not such conformity is to be found, I shall not prejudge this rule, but await the result of a candid investigation. If it shall be found to coincide with the Holy Scriptures, we are bound, according to principles already enunciated, to observe it; otherwise, it is not binding upon the conscience, for there can be no moral obligation where there is no Bible sanction.

The term *usury*, as employed in the Sacred Scriptures, signifies *interest*, or the *hire* exacted or paid for the use of money, or other things. The Israelites were not allowed to exact interest of one another, because they were brethren. If they took anything at all in this way it was called

usury. They were, however, allowed to exact it of strangers.

In so far as the question of usury is concerned, I am frank to acknowledge my inability to see the propriety of the distinction commonly made between *money* and *other property*. If a man is allowed to make an indefinite percentage on anything he has to sell, why may he not be allowed to do the same with respect to his money? Extortion is clearly enough and rightly enough condemned by the Scriptures, and also by the common sense notions of mankind; but, as it seems to me, it would be impossible to convince any reflecting mind, that it is worse, in so far as the principle is involved, to ask an exorbitant price for the use of money, when the necessity of others, and because the necessity of others, requires them to have it, than it is to take advantage of the necessity of others in selling them, or otherwise letting them have what they need.

As obvious as this seems to be, it is not unfrequently the case that a man takes advantage of the ignorance and inexperience of his fellow men, and of the exigency of the times or occasion, in demanding an exorbitant price for the rent of a house, or of a piece of land, for the necessities of life, or for whatever he may lease or sell; and there is no special law or rule, in State or Church, by which he can be affected; but yet if he does the same thing in respect of his money, he becomes specially obnoxious to the action of both. In the one instance, he realizes from twenty-five to one hundred per cent. on his property, and he escapes unmolested—does not incur the ban of society—and remains, perhaps, in good fellowship with the Church; in the other he realizes from ten to twelve per cent. on his money, and he obtains the odious epithet of a *usurer*, and subjects

himself, as it is supposed, to a penalty judicially or ecclesiastically inflicted.

Governments have imposed a certain per cent. on money. This is right and even essential in the administration of governmental and judicial affairs, but why a contract in which a larger per cent. is agreed upon by the parties should be held less sacred and binding in respect of money than of any other species of property, is a question not so easily answered. It would seem to be a direct interference with private contracts—individual rights. That a certain per centum should be fixed by law, and which can be collected only by law, where no private contract supervenes, I have already conceded to be right and necessary; but that a man should be allowed to take so much, and only so much for his money, while he is allowed to make two or three times as much on his other effects, seems not to be in harmony with our common sense notions of justice.

Usury is defined in our rule, “unlawful interest,” and a Christian of course is not permitted to do anything unlawful. But, we may inquire, in what sense and to what extent is it unlawful? In the country or countries where this rule was originated, there may have been some express law against usury, as I believe there is still in some of the States of this Union. This will not only account for the particular wording of the rule, but will also justify it, as we are required in Scripture, to be “subject to the powers that be.” But *our* State laws do not interfere except in certain cases. It does not positively forbid it—it only *negatives* the collection of it. A man may give or receive usury, and he is not amenable to our civil laws. It is only when he attempts the forcible collection of it that the law interferes; and then not in such manner as to inflict any

penalty, for he is still allowed the legal rate of interest—he only is not allowed a higher rate, though agreed upon in the contract. The same principle, perhaps, is extended to other things, with this difference: In other things evidence is admitted to show the value, according to the times, the usual rates of charge and other circumstances; while the value of money is fixed, and though really worth more at some times, in some places and under some circumstances than others, yet nothing of this kind can be pleaded. In all litigated cases it is adjudged to be worth just so much and no more.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood in these remarks. I am not defending *usury*. Far be it from me to do so. My opposition to it, however, is not on the ground of its being “unlawful interest,” for with us it cannot be strictly so called; but I am opposed to it on the higher ground of its being *extortion*; and I have been laboring to show that this is not the only way, nor even the most objectionable way in which *extortion* may be and is practiced. While we would condemn *extortion* in one way, let us not exercise undue leniency towards it in another. Everywhere, and in every sense, it is wrong—a grievous sin against human society, and wholly at variance with the Bible.

“*Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers.*”

The Psalmist prayed—“Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” Psalms xix., 14. The Apostle James said, “If any man among you seem to be religious and *bridleth not his tongue*, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” James i., 26.

Again: "If any man offend not in *word* the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body:" James iii., 2. Our blessed Lord said, "That every *idle word* that men shall say, they shall give an account of in the day of judgment; for by thy *words* thou shalt be justified, and by thy *words* thou shalt be condemned:" Mat. xii., 37.

If "*unprofitable conversation*" is condemned by Divine inspiration, how much rather is "*uncharitable conversation*," or that which is contrary to the great laws of Christian love! Yet there is scarcely anything more common. Sometimes it results from a malicious intention of injuring others—of pulling them down from their hardly gained position to their own level, and if possible to sink them lower even than themselves, but most frequently it is the result of mere thoughtlessness, of a desire to have something to say, to fill up some gap in the conversation, or to while away an idle hour. It is lamentable to *think*, it is self-degrading to know that there is a disposition in fallen human nature to take pleasure in having something to say derogatory of others—especially of those who stand fair in the public estimation; and still more especially, sometimes, when such a one "has started down hill, and almost every one is giving him a kick!" But alas! poor human nature! there is scarcely anything which, apart from the operations of Divine grace, it is not capable of doing.

While all *evil speaking* is contrary to Scripture teaching, our rule makes particular reference to the "speaking evil of magistrates or ministers." Shall we understand by these *civil* and *ecclesiastical* rulers? The Bible clearly teaches us that we are not to "speak evil" of either the one or the other. On the contrary, we are taught that

we should honor and obey them as God's ministers appointed to rule over us in the civil departments of life, or as His divinely called messengers, sent to "watch for our souls," and to labor for our good:" See Rom. xiii., 1, 7; 2 Peter ii, 10, 12; Jude viii., 10; 1 Thess. v., 12, 13, and Heb. xiii., 17

"Doing to others as we would not that they should do to us."

This is simply that law of the Saviour, called, from its very great importance, "the Golden Rule," negatively expressed. His words are—"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." If gold may be regarded as a thing most excellent, well has this law been called "the Golden Rule." It is the embodiment of all laws. It is an all-comprehensive directory, sufficient, at least, to enable us to ascertain in all cases the duties which are due from man to his fellow man. If, as a son, or daughter, or ward, we desire to know how we should demean ourselves towards a father, mother, guardian, teacher, or if, as an individual, we would know to what extent we may allow our angry feelings to lead us to maim, wound, kill our fellow-man, or in any way injure him in his person, or would we ascertain whether or not our lustful feelings towards another's wife, daughter, sister, friend, may be indulged—or would we know whether we may take without leave from our neighbor, or to use any unfair means in wresting from him what does not belong to us—or would we know whether we are doing right in "bearing false witness against our neighbor," or in speaking evil of him, or in endeavoring in any way to injure him in his reputation—or would we ascertain whether or not we may covet anything belonging to our neighbor,

so, at least, as to seek to make it ours, regardless of his preferences and feelings, or, would we, in a word, find out in any instance, whether or not we may do our fellow man this or that injury, or whether we ought to do him this or the other favor, or act of kindness, we have only to exchange places with that person or those persons, to be that son or daughter, to be that wife, sister or child, to be that neighbor, and put him or her, or them in our place and circumstances, and inquire how we could reasonably desire that they should act toward us in any of these particulars, and an answer to that inquiry will give us the rule of conduct by which we should be directed and controlled. "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Oh! if all men were only governed by this one principle; if all, in Church or State, in the various walks of private or public life, were to act toward each and toward all according to this blessed law of the precious Redeemer, what a different condition of things should we behold, how would quarrels, fightings, wars, tumults, cease everywhere, and "balmy peace pervade the whole"—how would envying, evil speaking, slanders, disappear from society, and heavenly love knit heart to heart in bonds of closest union! how would cheating, extortion, all unfair dealing between man and man give place to an earnest desire and continuous effort to promote each other's welfare! If there were no other proofs in the Book Divine of the Divinity of the Saviour's teaching, this one great, comprehensive, glorious law of His would establish it beyond the possibility of reasonable doubt.

NUMBER V.

GOLD AND COSTLY APPAREL—WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS—SINGING AND READING.

The next rule in order, and the last under the general principle of “avoiding evil,” though including in itself several particulars, is, “*Doing what we know is not for the glory of God.*”

In the Holy Scriptures we read : “Whether ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God :*” 1 Cor. x., 31. Hence, the rule itself is in perfect harmony with the Divine requisitions ; but let us look at its several specifications.

“*The putting on of gold and costly apparel.*”

Candor requires the admission, that this specification of the general principle, as here expressed, and as commonly understood, is not the Bible teaching upon the subject ; and I am not pledged to sustain the rule, nor shall I attempt to sustain it, in this presentation of it. I am not so wedded to these General Rules as to receive them without investigation, or to defend them without sufficient Scriptural warrant ; for I am bound by them only as they are in conformity with “the only and the sufficient rule.”

It is of great importance to know what the Sacred Scriptures do teach on this, as well as on other subjects ; and this is what I shall now seek to do. Let us proceed carefully and understandingly, and with a sincere desire to know the truth.

The Scriptural rules as given by the Apostles, Paul and Peter, and I know of no other—is this :

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety, not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but which becometh women professing godliness, with good works.” “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price; for after this manner in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands:” 1 Tim. ii., 9, 10; 1 Pet. iii., 3-5.

From these two quotations it is to be seen that both of these Apostles were speaking of *women* only—not, as I apprehend, because *men* would be less guilty in doing the same things—but because, in that day especially, men were much less likely to offend in this particular way. This of itself would lead to the inference—and this inference is directly confirmed by the terms employed—that the two Apostles were speaking of mere external adornments, and not of things serviceable and useful.

The “putting on of gold,” it will be further observed, is no more strongly condemned than some other things mentioned in connection with it, as “brodered” or “plaited hair,” “pearls,” “costly array,” “apparel;” and these are spoken against only as they are used for display. According, therefore, to the plain teaching of these Scriptures there is no more harm in wearing a gold watch, a gold pin, or anything else made of gold—if worn for use, and not display, and if the circumstances of the wearer justify it—than there is in putting on any serviceable garment. These

Scriptures, when rightly interpreted, simply teach, that those who profess to be the followers of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart,” who profess to be “crucified with Christ,” and not conformed to the maxims and customs of the world, who profess to be seeking “those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,” ought not to indulge in extraneous ornaments, the mere trappings of pride, the exhibition of worldly-mindedness, a fondness for display, the *renounced* “pumps and vanities of the world,” for in this there would be a manifest inconsistency, an entire want of correspondence between profession and practice.

The rule in our Discipline, when construed in harmony with the Scriptures—and this is the only allowable way in which we can construe it, and not otherwise—is of binding force or obligation.

Formerly there was in our Discipline, a chapter, or rather a *section* upon the subject of dress; but it has been wisely expunged: I say *wisely*—not because the subject is not in itself of sufficient importance to have a place there, but because it is impossible to go beyond a few general principles—those Scriptural ones, for instance, to which I have invited attention, as the condition of society the circumstance of life, and the fashion of the age, are liable to change, and do change repeatedly, and preclude the propriety of any specific directions. Whatever may be said of fashion in the abstract, and no one can look upon it as more whimsical or foolish than myself—yet, unless it be violative of some principle of modesty or decorum, or lead to expenses beyond the means of those endeavoring to observe it, there is no moral principle involved, and no moral rule is called for. To say that such or such things only should be

worn, or that such or such styles only should be observed, is to set up a law outside of the moral code more objectionable than the evil it is designed to prevent—is to put a ban upon all improvement in that direction, is, indeed, a violent interference with rights, over which the assumed legislative authority has no control.

I have known persons, who made pretensions to a high degree of sanctity, severely censure, and even publicly reprove a truly pious sister, because she wore a plain gold ring on her finger, or an unostentatious gold pin in her bosom, or a curl, or a frill, or a ruffle, or even a bow on her bonnet, while from the very cut of the censor's coat, and the importance which he attached to that style, in contra-distinction with all others, to say nothing of the *costliness* of the *material* and the *wealth of buttons*, there was afforded an indubitable evidence that he laid more stress on these things, and prided himself more in being in *his* fashion, than did the subject of his caustic rebuke. It is time that all such attempts to control others in matters of mere taste had ceased, and that those who presume to differ from some stereotyped model, were allowed to do so without censure.

Were I to give any rule at all on dress it would be simply this: Persons ought to dress decently, according to their circumstances in life, or the positions they occupy, and the means they possess, so as not to be slovenly, uncomfortable, on the one hand, and so as not to encourage extravagance or foster a disposition to pride on the other. Christians, especially, should dress in such manner as not to attract particular attention to their dress, and so as to exhibit a beautiful harmony between their own external adorning, and "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

The conclusion of "this whole matter" is, that

“the putting on of gold,” except for mere display, is not interdicted by the Sacred Scriptures, and even when used for mere ornament, it is not more objectionable than other mere *external adornings*, as *broidered or braided hair, pearls or costly array.*

“The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

“The diversions” disallowed by this rule are such, and such only, “as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus;” and the rule itself is in perfect consonance with Apostolic teaching: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him:” Col. iii., 17. However certain amusements may be pleaded for, on the ground of their innocence, it should be remembered that there is a prior question to be settled! Can they “be used in the name of the Lord Jesus?” If this question can be answered affirmatively, the rule does not forbid them: otherwise, they are forbidden—not only by our rule, but—and this is of graver importance, by the inspired word of God; and they would be equally prohibited, though the Discipline, or any Church authority said nothing against them, and even permitted them.

To do anything “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” is to do it for His sake, or by his authority; is to do it from a principle of love to Him and His cause, and in order to promote His interests in the world, and to glorify Him. As to many of those diversions called innocent, every one must determine for himself, whether they are “used,” or can “be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.” A long and extended observation has led me to mistrust well nigh the whole of them. Those members of the Church who use them, almost inva-

riably become irregular in their attendance upon the ordinances of God and the means of grace, absenting themselves especially on sacramental occasions. They are seen to occupy seats at a greater distance from the pulpit and the altar, a sure indication that they have retrograded also in religion, and are known to be destitute of spiritual enjoyment. *Innocent* is not the term to apply to things producing these results. What we do "in the name of the Lord Jesus" brings us nearer to the place where His people are found, and produces in us a larger measure of true spiritual enjoyment.

Many, I have no doubt, are lead to indulge in various worldly amusements by the speciousness of the plea set up for them, or rather, I might say, by the insidiousness of the artifice by which they are sought to be recommended. The getting up of *Fairs, Charades, Tableaux*, etc., for the purpose of building or repairing of churches or parsonages, of supporting the minister, or of supplementing his salary, of promoting missionary and other benevolent enterprises, sounds well in the ear of the uninitiated, and is well calculated to blind the minds of those who, in these respects, are not anxious to see very clearly. These objects are good, praiseworthy; but there is a previous question to be settled. Are these amusements innocent and right in themselves? If so, there is no need of any such artifices. If they are not right, the praiseworthiness of the objects cannot make them so. "The end does not sanctify the means." "We are not to do *evil* that good may come of it." These last words are those of an inspired Apostle, and will apply in all cases in which men seek to justify themselves in evil or wrong doing, on the ground of the ultimate good they have in prospect.

The simple question to be asked in reference to all worldly amusements, is, "Can they be used in the name of the Lord Jesus?" Do those who attend *balls, dancing parties, theatres, circuses and such like places*, go there "in the name of the Lord Jesus?" Do they earnestly invite the Saviour to go with them? Do they anxiously pray that the Holy Spirit's influences may be with them, and guard them against evil thoughts, and improper conduct. Are they as eager to go to "the house of the Lord," the prayer-meeting, the Sabbath-school, and to use the various means of grace? A conscientious answer to these questions will remove all doubt from the minds of those who are disposed to submit un murmuringly to the will of God'

"The singing those songs, or reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge and love of God."

To *know God* and to *love God* constitute the sum and substance of religion; or to express it differently, "to love God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," is "the first and great commandment." Now, in order to *love God*, we must *know Him*. "Those *songs*" may very well be sung, and "those *books*" may very well be read, which serve to increase our *knowledge* of God, and incline us to *love Him*.

Singing is not only a delightful, but is an exceedingly important part of God's worship. We are just as much bound to praise God with the melody and harmony of sounds as in any other way. The Book of Psalms is a book of songs, and shows everywhere the excellence of song. The Apostle Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and

spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts, unto the Lord." On that sad night of the betrayal, Christ and his disciples, before going forth to their loved place of resort, "sung a hymn." Higher authority than this cannot be had. And how much is there in a good *book* to make us wiser and better?

Instrumental music—in reference to which I ought, perhaps, to say something—is objectionable only as it serves in connection with the *choir*, to *appropriate* the singing, or to introduce *formality*. When the instrument and the choir only *lead* the music, and *improve* the singing, when they are so placed and seated as not to draw the congregation *away* from the pulpit, but to bring them *nearer* to it, they subserve, both the one and the other a valuable purpose, and may well be encouraged. The Psalmist praised God "upon the psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings, upon the harp with a solemn sound:" *Psa. xcii., 3; cxliv. 9, and other places*; and why may not the Christian do so also? I cannot but regard that devotion spurious, which would be injuriously affected, or destroyed, instead of being rendered more intensive, by the deep tones of a well played organ, commingling with the mellifluous sounds of many voices. Can it be supposed that the rapt Evangelist was at all disturbed in his devotions, or felt less like joining in the "new song sung before the throne," because that with "the voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder," he heard "the voice of *harpers harping* with their *harps*?" *Rev. xiv., 2, 3.*

The "songs," however, here meant, and the "books" here spoken of, are those of a different tendency. Truth is not neutral. There can be no middle point between *truth* and *error*, *good* and

evil, right and wrong. The songs we sing, and the books we read must make impressions for good or evil—must tend in some way, and to some extent, to increase our knowledge of God, or to diminish and even to pervert that knowledge, must incline our hearts more and more to love Him, and to become more and more like Him, or must have upon us the contrary effect.

I have, however, much to say yet on "*books*;" but must reserve it for the next number.

NUMBER VI.

THE READING OF BOOKS.

The pernicious tendency of many of those books interdicted by our rule, is at once apparent to every pious mind. They assume, for the most part, the dignified title of *literature*, though better known as *yellow covered literature*. They abound in almost every bookstore, meet you along every thoroughfare, and are to be found on the centre table, and in the library of many families, even some Christian families, attracting attention by oddly shaped and flaming characters, and doing an incalculable amount of evil, especially among the young, the ignorant and inexperienced.

Now, I am very far from condemning everything denominated fiction, or that comes to us in the name and in the guise of a novel. I have listened to a great many tirades against novel reading, I have heard much said against works of fiction, generally ; and so long as such strictures were universal, indiscriminating, I remained unaffected by them. There are many works of fiction, as, for instance, a large proportion of our Sunday-school reading books ; there are—be not alarmed, over-fastidious critic—even some *novels*, the number may be small, but still there are some *novels*, which may be read to advantage. The danger here is the cultivation of a taste for this, and for only this kind of reading.

Among the books of this character which I would recommend, I do not include *all* that are seemingly or professedly moral and even religious, for some of these, though often spoken of and commended, and sometimes by religious journal-

ists, are nevertheless, as I think, of most pernicious tendency and effect. In the trashy volumes of which I spoke awhile ago—the *cheap* and yet *dear*, because *worthless*, literature of the age—their immoral tendency is seen upon the surface, their infidel proclivities stand out in bold relief, or else the violations of a refined taste are so many and flagrant, that while they excite the imagination, they disgust all the better feelings of the heart. But in certain works of higher respectability, everything of immoral or infidel tendency is carefully concealed. Their very freedom from any overt attack upon morals or religion, prevents that vigilance which should be observed. The pill, whose nauseating properties would otherwise cause it to be rejected, yet being *sugar-coated*, is swallowed with avidity, and the poison unseen is left to do its work of death.

The objection which I have to this kind of books, is not that which usually obtains. It lies deeper, is more fundamental, and more ~~foo~~ in accordance with the rule I am considering. These books while they seem to have a proper reverence for religion, yet it is not the religion of the Bible. The “reading” of them, therefore, does “not tend to the knowledge or love of God.” This is seen partly in the side-flings which are sometimes made at those who are seeking to be Christians according to the Bible pattern, and more fully in the absence of those regenerating influences, by which only man, *fallen* man, can be saved. The heroes and heroines of these work, are, for the most part, of faultless moral characters, and some of them are apparently pious; but they are so naturally, or become so by their own efforts; at any rate, there is no reference to a Divine power through which they were brought into this condition. The deep depravity

of our moral nature, the necessity of a Divinely-wrought atonement, of repentance and faith in Christ, in order to justification or pardon, of the new birth or spiritual regeneration, of the vitalizing influences and ever-abiding energies of the Holy Spirit, to make us Christians, and to keep us Christians, are generally *ignored*, if not *repudiated*. These absolutely essential teachings find no place in many seemingly moral and professedly religious works. I do not mean that these fundamental principles should be formally stated and discussed. I only claim that such books should be true to nature, true to life, true to the Scriptures. The characters they give must not be absurd, impossible, such as never have existed, do not now exist, and never can exist in this sin-defiled world. If they speak of morality let it be that of the Bible; if they mention piety, let it be such as accords with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures; if they present a Christian, let it be one who ~~has~~ become so by "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," and let there not be room for the destructive heresy, that a man can make himself good, and prepare himself for heaven by simply leading a moral life and doing some of the deeds of piety.

"The carnal mind is" already sufficiently at "enmity with God," poor, fallen human nature is already sufficiently at variance with the doctrines of Christ, especially of that of the sinner's justification by faith only, and not by works; vain man is already wise enough in his own estimation, and sufficiently inclined to rely upon himself, to think that by a little evanescent goodness, a few fitful works of charity, and a sort of commonplace morality, he can fit himself for heaven; and he needs not the encouragement which these books give him, to reject the humiliating doc-

trines of the cross, and to build up his hope of salvation upon the flimsy ground of his own merits. Give me one of Sir Walter Scott's, which, without affecting to teach me religion, furnishes me with much historic information, and by means of an ingenious plot, holds me awake while he lets me into the inner circles of the society of days long since by-gone, rather than one of those so-called religious novels, which comes to me in an imposing garb, and would hush up my conscience with the thought that "I am reading a good religious book," while all that is fundamental in religion is skillfully kept out of it.

This is a *reading* age; or at least we may suppose so from the number and variety of the publications which are almost everywhere extant. The press was, perhaps, never more energetically worked. It is wonderful to think of the number of books, and especially periodicals in the shape of *Quarterlies*, *Monthlies*, *Weeklies*, *Dailies* now published, to say nothing of the *Almanacs* and thousand and one notice sheets with which the country is well-nigh flooded. It would be useless to ask: "Are they all read?" Many of them are only lightly skimmed, if noticed at all, and, indeed, many of them deserve no more than a passing glance. But right here there is needed an admonition. It has been somewhat pithily said, that "what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well." There may be exceptional instances; but the general truth cannot be successfully controverted. Varying the aphorism to suit the present case, it may be said that, "whatever is worth being read at all, is worth being *well* read." The practice of surface reading has a tendency to dissipate the mind, to weaken or destroy its energies. We soon, almost inadvertently, come to give but little attention to those great truths, which seri-

ously, essentially, lastingly affect our spiritual well-being. The Bible itself, the Holy Book Divine, the source of all religious truth, is soon neglected altogether, or only superficially read and studied.

This may be called a *paragraphal* age. Newspaper editors, especially, foreshadowing what the future is to be, or shaping out a course they would like to see pursued, or ministering to a disposition in this direction already made manifest, are inclined to indulge much in paragraphal writing. Instead of long editorials on the leading subjects of the day, they are giving us short paragraphs on many things. In this there are advantages as well as disadvantages. It may well subserve the purposes of general information; but it is susceptible of being carried to an extreme, and it may result in a disinclination to everything of a close, serious, argumentative character, to all books which take an elaborate view of any particular theme, and to all preaching, except that which abounds in pithy sayings or brief discussions of a great variety of subjects. Perhaps authors and ministers had as well anticipate what is coming, and in some sort prepare for it, if in their preparation they do not unduly hasten what, nevertheless, seems to be inevitable.

Religious works, as well as others, are constantly coming forth from the ever teeming press, so that, with the inspired Preacher, we may say, "Of making many books there is no end." Whether they are read with the same avidity as the others does not appear. I suppose, however, that they are largely purchased, and read to some extent—hastily glanced at, a paragraph here and there. But what we should mostly fear is that the Bible, the great Chart of our salvation, the only sure guide along life's pathway, may be overlooked or neglected.

Although this may be called a *reading age* I fear it cannot be rightly denominated a *Bible reading age*. A beautiful copy of the Sacred Book may occupy a conspicuous place in every library; an elegantly bound volume of Divine inspiration may be found on every centre table; but its dust covered lids, unless pride or fashion keeps them well brushed, gives mournful evidence that it is seldom opened, that it is but little read! How many, alas! are seeking to satiate their thirst at the numerous little rills which are said to proceed from this blessed fountain, but more or less muddied through the means of their outflow, while the fountain itself, brimming full of the unadulterated "waters of life," is unapproached, except by a few who are unwilling to receive from any less source the life-sustaining element! How many are endeavoring "to walk in the light of the fires they have enkindled," or that flickers from the dim torch-lights of others, while the Heavenly Lamp hangs out there, sending forth its rays of Divine illumination for the enlightenment and guidance of all who are groping their way through the darkness of this world to the regions of light beyond—the Lamp which sheds its bright radiance upon this darkened life below, illumines with its cheering beams "the valley of the shadow of death," lights up with its living effulgence the dark portals of the house of death, and throws its brightening sheen upon the borders of the other world, enabling us by faith to take a view of the undimmed glories of the Heavenly place! How many are searching among the massive tomes of ancient and modern literature, for the knowledge of some *healing balm*, some long-forgotten *panacea*, or some still forthcoming *elixir*, to heal the wounds which sin has made, and to relieve the sufferings of this sin-blighted world,

while they turn away with inward loathing from the great Journal of Spiritual health, in which the only available remedy is set forth, with all necessary directions for its proper use ; the only specific for earth's woes, and which, unlike those "patented nostrums," is offered "without money and without price!"

I shall not, of course, be understood as decrying other books, for I have already expressed my high appreciation of many of them. I love good books, and take pleasure in acknowledging my obligations to them, and in cordially and strongly recommending them. I am objecting only to these taking the place of the precious Revelation which God has given us. I am not one of those either who believe that we should read no book except the Bible; I am contending only that the Bible must not be overlooked; I am seeking only to give it its appropriate, and that is the *highest* place among them all; I am directing only that, in reference to certain truths, we should seek them first of all in the great unadulterated source, whence as "living waters," they emanate, that as pilgrims along the pathway of life, we should walk by the light of this Divine lamp, rather than subject ourselves to the possibility of being blinded and led astray by the bewildering glare of inferior and uncertain lights, that as a sin-defiled human being we should go at once to the spiritual health-book, to ascertain the nature of our disease and its only remedy; in a word, I am trying to impress the thought that we are not to satisfy ourselves with what is taught by men, however wise and good, when the Great Text book is open to us, and we may study it and ought to study it for ourselves.

I am fully aware that in science and literature there are truths which, for want of mental ability

or the necessary intellectual training, or for want of leisure and the requisite facilities, many cannot pry into and understand, and are compelled to rely upon the facts, inductions and conclusions of others more highly favored in these respects; but it would not be commendable to accept those statements, and blindly to rely upon those conclusions where vital interests are involved, while they have the ability and requisite means of knowing for themselves. So there are in the Sacred Scriptures certain mysteries, great recondite truths, for which a large part of mankind have not the time, the opportunity nor the necessary learning and ability to uncover and make plain even to their own comprehension, and they must take them as they have been developed by others who, from strength of intellect, previous studies, habits of thought and other circumstances, are better qualified to understand and unfold them, or leave them as things inexplicable or unexplained; yet, surely none can justify themselves in taking their religious views second-handed, when they may go to the *Book* where they are spread out plainly before the minds of all who choose to search for them. It is their duty, like the more nobly acting Bereans of old, to "search the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so."

Priceless boon! the Book of Heaven,
Best instructor of the mind,
Light to wandering mortals given,
Fount of happiness divine:
Let thy truths my spirit cheer,
Be my Guide and Counsellor here!

Book of books! the Book of ages,
Cloud by day and lamp by night,
Let thy soul-refreshing pages
Be my study and delight;
Book of God, my mind illumine,
Guide me to the pilgrim's home!

NUMBER VII.

NEEDLESS SELF-INDULGENCE—LAYING UP TREASURES ON EARTH—BORROWING, ETC., WITHOUT A PROBABILITY OF PAYING.

“Softness, or needless self-indulgence.”

It would be difficult to determine what is here meant by “*softness*,” were it not explained to be “*needless self-indulgence*,” not *self-indulgence* simply, but *needless self-indulgence*. Affirmatively, therefore, the rule may be understood as enjoining the duty of self-denial, and it is thus in entire harmony with the teachings of our precious Redeemer. “Whosoever will come after me,” that is, be His disciple, “let him deny himself:” Mark viii., 34. Hence the scripturalness of the rule cannot be doubted; but in view of a possible misconception of its meaning, it may be discussed more fully.

Mr. Wesley was very far from being an anchorite. He not only did not retire from the world, but he came constantly in contact with it, and labored incessantly to enlighten its darkness, instruct its ignorance, and bring it to the knowledge of the Saviour. He did not, however, attach any merit to his self-denials and sacrifices, though undeniably many and great, and his labors almost unprecedented since the days of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. He neither taught nor believed that they were, in themselves, possessed of any saving virtue, nor in doing them was he actuated by any such motives; but taught clearly and fully, that “we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the

gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The pioneers of Wesleyan Methodism in this country, made also self-denials many and great, endured hardships as few have done, were “in fastings often,” were “in perils” frequently; and “in labors more abundant.” But they did not endure, and suffer, and labor, that, by mortifying the flesh, they might recommend themselves to God’s favor. They did only what they conceived to be their duty, in promoting the glory of God, and in “winning souls to Christ.” They were not so deluded as to imagine that they were doing *more* than their duty; nor did they suffer and endure *more* than was required of them, in view of the necessities of the times and other circumstances.

Comparisons are frequently made between the ministers and members, and especially ministers of our Church in the present day, and those of earlier times; and, as a matter of course, greatly to the detriment of those of the present age. There may be much truth in the results obtained; but there is also much error. A well-deserved tribute of respect is paid to those of the by-gone generations; but great injustice is done to those of the present. Let us, therefore, calmly consider this subject.

The question itself is often wrongly stated, and the conclusion reached an unfair one. The question is not whether ministers and Church members, or for the sake of greater distinctness, let us confine the discussion to ministers only—as what, in this respect, is true of them, is true also of members—make the same self-denials and sacrifices, and perform the same arduous labors, which our fathers made and performed, for that they do not is at once admitted; but whether the

ministers of this age perform the duties devolving upon them, in their circumstances, as the pioneers of Methodism did in their very different circumstances. When it is shown in the argument, which by the way is what no one denies, that the present ministers do not endure and suffer as much as those earlier ones, the conclusion is by no means legitimately reached that there has been a sad deterioration in life and conduct; for as we cannot do *more* than our duty, he who performs his duty, according to his circumstances, or the requisitions made of him, does as *well*, though he may not do so *much*, as another, whose surroundings are different. This may need illustration, but it certainly cannot require proof.

The ministers and preachers of our times—and I am not encountering a myth, or creating a man of straw that I may have the pleasure of demolishing him, but that which I have had to meet at different times during my ministry—have been heavily complained of, indeed severely censured, because they do not do as the earlier itinerants did—do not walk, or ride on horseback, over large tracts of country, swim rivers, or creeks, and sleep beneath the leafy foliage or uncurtained sky, with the bare ground or their saddle-blanket for their bed, and a rough stone or their saddle-wallets for their pillows, as the pioneers of Methodism sometimes had to do. It would seem a sufficient reply to all this to say, there is no virtue in doing these things only as they may be necessary in the performance of duty. If they are done for any other purpose, they are worse than useless, they are absolutely harmful. They become at once the superstitions of Popery, of no more value than self-flagellations, long and wasting fastings, long and perilous pilgrimages, or any other self-imposed, or priestly inflicted penances.

We honor our fathers for their devotedness, for their many self-denials, their great sacrifices, their almost unprecedented labors. I would not detract, in the slightest degree imaginable, from their well-earned fame; their dearly-bought reputation, but would award them all the praise so justly due them. The exigences of the times required of them these self-denials and hardships, and, as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," they endured them. But the times are changed. The preachers now are far more favorably situated; and while they would be recreant to their high calling were they to refuse to endure, and suffer, and labor, as their fathers did, when necessary, in the performance of duty, there is neither common sense, nor good religion in their doing so when no such necessity exists.

Where would be the use, for instance, in their circuits, or even in their riding on horse-back, if their circumstances and the facilities now afforded them enable them to travel more rapidly, more conveniently, or more comfortably? The writer of this article has a feeling recollection of the refusal of a board of stewards to allow him anything, because he rode to his circuit in a *sulky*—a borrowed one at that! though he traveled almost all the time, as indeed he was compelled to do, on horseback, after he had reached it! Where is the propriety of their going over large sections of country, and being for the most part absent from their families, when by the increase of the ministry and the multiplication of the fields of labor, they may be well and fully occupied on smaller works? How much religion is in their swimming creeks and rivers, when there are good bridges or ferries of which they may avail themselves? What valuable purpose would it subserve, to sleep in the wild woods, or under the open sky,

with the uncarpeted earth for their bed, and a stone for their pillow, when there are good and comfortable houses near by, in which they may find more than a welcome? Shall they undergo all these privations and encounter all these difficulties merely because others have done so? This would be superstition, and not religion. Our fathers did so because of the exigences of the times or occasions; and we shall imitate them only when we make such sacrifices and self-denials as are now required in the performance of our duties.

Understanding the rule as requiring self-denials, hardships, labors, otherwise than in the discharge of duty, or for the mere purpose of self-humiliation, or self-mortification, or because of the false notions of others, it is not in consonance with Bible teachings; but, understanding it, as it obviously should be understood, as allowing no self-denials or hardships to hinder us in the performance of our duties, it is in beautiful harmony with the whole tenor of the Sacred Writings.

“Laying up treasures upon earth.”

Our Saviour taught: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also:” Matt. vi., 19, 21.

By *treasures* we may understand such “precious movables as gold, silver, etc., in the mass or worked into vessels, costly apparel,” and I would add, “grains—for, in these the wealth of the ancients principally consisted.”—*Bloomfield*.

These were subject to be destroyed by “moth or rust,” or the clay-wall houses were liable to be broken through, and the goods stolen.

Our blessed Lord was very far from intending to encourage, either here or elsewhere, idleness, or even utter indifference to our worldly concerns, extravagance, or wastefulness in our expenditures. On the contrary, He taught, directly, or by His Apostles, diligence in providing for such interests, and economy in worldly things. What He had especially in view was the transcendently greater value of spiritual blessings. Everything of an earthly nature is short-lived, perishing; and the body itself is soon to fall into decay and death. But heavenly treasures perish not—are subject to no decay, to no loss. The soul is imperishable, and shall live on “in raptures or in woe” forever and forever. We should, therefore, “lay up treasures in heaven” first of all, and more carefully than all. Having, in the proper exercise of a prudent foresight, made the best provisions we can for our temporal welfare, we should dismiss from our minds all anxious thought, all perplexing cares, and rely confidently on our Heavenly Father, with the calm assurance that He who “feeds the sparrows,” and decks and beautifies “the lilies of the field,” will feed and clothe, and take care of us who are of “more value than many sparrows,” and more precious in His sight than the stately cedars of Lebanon. “The love of money,” said an inspired Apostle, “is the root of all evil:” I Tim., vi., 10. He did not say “*money*,” but the “*love of money*.” Money itself is not an evil, but a blessing. The possession of great riches is not absolutely incompatible with a holy life. Abraham, who was called “the friend of God,” and “the Father of the Faithful,” was a rich man in his day. Wealth may be

an unspeakable advantage to us in many ways; and with our money we may do a vast deal of good. It is “the *love* of money,” an inordinate thirst for gain, that constitutes the root of the evil.

There is one other thing here which requires notice, the difficulty, indeed, without the aid of Divine grace, the *impossibility* of possessing riches, and yet not have the affections set upon them. “Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.” These are Christ’s words; and He said again—“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God:” Matt. xix., 24. We need seek no far-fetched illustrations. Our Lord clearly intended to express an impossibility in so far as human means are concerned. Hence, He added: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Man cannot possess riches without to some extent trusting in them. Nothing less than the power of Divine grace can remove this idolatrous trust. To conclude, the rule is but a concise expression of the Saviour’s teaching, and is, of course, scriptural.

“Borrowing without a probability of paying, or taking up goods, without a probability of paying for them.”

There may be two cases. The “improbability” may exist *with* or *without* our knowledge—that is, we may know that there is no probability of our paying back the money we borrow, or of paying for the goods we “take up,” at the time we borrow or make the purchase, or we may think there is a probability, when really there is not. In the former instance it is fraud; willful, intentional fraud; and no argument is needed to show that the rule as thus interpreted is a scriptural one;

for there can be no doubt that fraud is forbidden, clearly, positively, strongly forbidden in the Sacred Scriptures.

In the latter instance, there may be fraud, though unpremeditated, or there may be simply misfortune. If we have, at the time of borrowing or purchasing, the means of paying the debt thus incurred, and waste those means in extravagant living, or unnecessary expenditures, or place them beyond the reach of the lender or creditor; or if we even fail to make proper exertions to pay these debts, it is, soften it as we may, fraud; for it is a waste of what does not properly belong to us, or the cheating of another of what is justly due him, and in either case involves a criminal disregard for the rights of others. But if we have means, and by unforeseen calamities, and not by any neglect or waste on our part, we become dispossessed of those means, we are only unfortunate, and may be pitied, but cannot be blamed.

How many, alas! who were in possession of ample means of meeting their indebtedness, who, therefore, did not "borrow money without a probability of paying, and did not take up goods without the probability of paying for them," have, by the events of the last few years—events over which they had no control—been deprived of their means, and have become hopelessly insolvent! We may pity them; we ought, indeed, deeply and truly to sympathize with them; but we cannot censure them. They do not violate the spirit of our General Rule.

But, to say nothing of the past, the rule, even in its mildest aspect, and when it may not be insisted upon as a condition of church-membership, is a good one. It is better not to go in debt at all, when it can be possibly avoided. The cash system, especially in the present precarious state

of things, is the best, both for the buyer and the seller. Happy is the man, who, although he has but little, has no creditors to demand that *little* of him! The little he has is his own as steward of the Lord Almighty.

NUMBER VIII

DOING GOOD, TO THE BODY—TO THE SOUL.

Having considered those General Rules of our Church which forbid the doing of certain things, I come now to those which require the performance of certain duties.

Those who “desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins,” are required, in the second place, to give evidence of that desire by “*doing good.*”

The object of the whole of God’s dealings with us, of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, His simple, yet sublime teachings, His holy example, His wonderful works, His sufferings and death, His resurrection and ascension into heaven, of the Holy Spirit’s descent, His enlightening influences, His quickening energies, His regenerating or sanctifying powers, His efficient aid, His abundant consolations—of the various means of grace, the institutions of the Christian Church, the ministry of the word, the ordinances of religion—in a word, of the grand machinery of the Gospel, in all its parts, in all its operations and effects, was that mankind, made *good* at first, but

sadly *fallen* from their primeval condition, might, by the renewing of their minds, be made *good* again, and rendered capable of "*doing good*."

The Christian is not designed to be a mere *negative* character. He is not only to "avoid evil of every kind," he is not only to "abstain from the very appearance of evil," but he is to be *affirmatively good, positively righteous*. He is, in the language of the great Apostle, "*to do good, and to communicate*," as "with such sacrifices," and not with the unrequired offerings of a pompous ritualism—"God is well pleased:" Heb. xiii., 16. This is the teaching, not only of our Church, and every Church constituted according to the Divine model, but of God's holy word from beginning to end.

This General Rule is, however rendered more explicit by being distributed into its several parts.

"*By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men.*"

The enunciation of this *second* principle, like that of the *first*, is followed by an enumeration of the several particulars it includes. The *first* of these, in the order, is—

"*To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.*"

Love to God, called frequently in the New Testament, *charity*, is the essence of all religion. There can, indeed, be no religion without it. "The first and great commandment of all" is: "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." The necessary effect of love to God is love to man. Hence, the second great commandment is like unto the first—

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “Upon these two,” said our blessed Lord, “hang all the law and the prophets:” Matt. xxii., 37, etc. There is no law, or rule of life, which comes not within their comprehensive meaning.

“The disciple whom Jesus loved,” said: “If a man say I love God, and hateth (that is, does not love) his brother, he is a liar, for if we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen? And this is the commandment that we have received from Him, that he that loveth God, loveth his brother also:” 1 John iv., 20. Hence, this same Apostle gave as an evidence of that essential change which the penitent, believing sinner undergoes in becoming a child of God—*love to the brethren*: “We know that we have passed from death unto life *because we love the brethren.*” Love to God’s people proceeds from love to God, and is at once the fruit and the evidence of it.

Now, love, as brought to view in the Sacred Scriptures, is not a mere *feeling* or *passion* which kindles, and burns, and expires within itself, but it seeks to expend its heat and light upon surrounding objects. If we love any person, we desire his welfare, and take pleasure in bestowing favors upon him. Consequently, the prophet Evangelist again wrote: “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” 1 John iii., 17. He did not ask, “How dwelleth the love of his brother in him?” but overstepping that as too obvious to need special notice, he asked at once, “How dwelleth the love of God in him?” The shutting up of his bowels of compassion from his needy brother sufficiently shows that he does not love his brother, for if he did he

would endeavor to relieve him, to do him good ; and as he loveth not his brother whom he sees and knows, he cannot love God whom “ he has not seen.”

Our Gracious Redeemer, in His description of the last judgment, suspends the everlasting destinies of mankind on their giving or not giving these manifestations of their love to His “ brethren,” with whom He identified Himself, considering every act of kindness done them, or neglect of such act of kindness, as done, or refused to be done to Himself, as though no love professed for Him personally, was of any avail, or could even exist, unless extended to those who are renewed in His image : “ Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” And why ? We need enter into no metaphysical speculations, we need not weary ourselves in searching out any recondite meaning. The reason is given by the great Judge Himself : “ For I was an hungered ”—hear it all ye who talk so eloquently of love, but fail to show its fruits, “ and ye gave Me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in ; naked and ye clothed Me ; I was sick, and ye visited Me ; I was in prison and ye came to Me.” And when, in their innocent astonishment they shall begin to inquire when they ever saw Him thus, He will answer, “ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me :” Matt. xxv., 24.

“ Then shall He say to those on the left hand : Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Again we may ask, Why ? and again the reason is furnished by Him who “ spake as never man spake :” “ For I was an

hungered, and ye gave Me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in ; naked, and ye clothed Me not ; sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not :” Matt. xxv., 40, etc. And when they, too, shall begin to inquire when they ever saw Him in any of these conditions, He will answer, and how should those tremble, who, like Saul of Tarsus, are manifesting the intensity of their zeal for God, by persecuting His people, “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.”

How many are there, alas ! who are fiercely contending for *words*, and *names*, and *things* of but little importance, whose hearts are never touched with “the feeling of another’s woe,” whose hands are never extended to give bread to the hungry, to give clothing to the shivering poor, or to minister in any way to the wants of the distressed ; whose presence never brings light and comfort into the darkened chambers of the sick ; whose religion consists in the reception of certain religious dogmas, the monotonous rounds of formal ceremonies, the ephemeral glow of certain excited feelings, rather than in the performance of the great practical duties of our Holy Christianity—duties which spring forth legitimately from a living faith in Christ, which itself “works by love and purifies the heart !”

Enough has been said to show the entire conformity of our rule with the teachings of our Lord and Saviour, and of His inspired Apostles ; but it may be remarked here, as in substance it has been remarked elsewhere, for the remark is of sufficient importance to be iterated and reiterated, that while no Church is justifiable in requiring *more* of its membership than the great and only Law-giver Himself has required, yet, certainly,

no Church is justifiable in requiring *less*. Every Church, therefore, that imposes obligations which He has not imposed, that requires duties which He has not enjoined, or that fixes the terms of Church membership otherwise than as He has arranged them; as, also, every Church that modifies His regulations, that lessens his requirements, or that lowers the standard of obligations and duties from the position in which He has placed it, is assuming prerogatives, usurping powers of legislation, and exercising authorities, which have never been granted, and to which that Church has no rightful claim!

“To their souls, by instructing, reproof, and exhorting all we have any intercourse with, trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that we are not to do good, unless our hearts be free to it.”

This is the higher duty—not in reference to the nature of its obligations, but of its results, the higher duty, as the soul itself is of vastly higher importance than the body. If we should do good to the *bodies* of men, of the ability of which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison, how much rather should we do good “to their *souls*,” in the various ways indicated! And as the lower duty has been shown to be in entire harmony with the Holy Scriptures, it would seem to be a work of supererogation to attempt to prove that the higher duty is also in perfect conformity with the Divine requirements. Hence, the latter part of the rule only demands consideration: “*trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that we are not to do good, unless our hearts be free to it.*”

“*Unless our hearts be free to it.*” This may mean “unless we are *freely disposed, or willing to*

do it; or it may mean, unless we have an *impression* on our minds that we ought to do it." These two meanings are very nearly connected, though not identical, for the impression may not be congenial with our feelings.

In respect to the first of these meanings, taken negatively, we sometimes hear persons very erroneously contending that it is just as well *to do* a thing as to *desire* to do it—that it is just as well to *go* to a ball, or to a dancing party, to *go* to the theatre or circus, or to any other place of amusement, as to *want* to go, and yet stay away. However, if the question be put differently, if we say that it is just as wicked to *steal*, as to *desire* to steal, although the desire is restrained; that it is just as wicked to *do a murder*, as to have an *inclination* in that direction, although the inclination is overcome; that it is just as bad to *commit adultery*, as it is to entertain the *lascivious thought*, although that thought is successfully bridled in, they will, perhaps, admit the fallacy of their position. This much is true, that a desire and intention to do some act of wickedness, which, for want of opportunity, or for some other reason than that it is wrong in the sight of God, is not done, is itself, whether of equal magnitude with the doing of it or not, a sin. Conversely, it has been said, though perhaps, less frequently, that we had as well *not do* a virtuous act at all, as to do it *reluctantly*, as, though it was not a virtuous act to overcome our disposition to do wrong, as also our disinclination to do what is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

With respect to the other meaning, we sometimes find persons ready to do anything not notoriously wicked, if not *impressed* that it is wrong for them to do so. On the other hand, and more commonly, there are persons who cannot be in-

duced to do that which the Bible directly or inferentially makes it their duty to do, unless they have an *impression* on their minds they ought to do it.

In any, and in all of these instances, the same great principle is violated, namely : that, in order to ascertain, in a moral point of view, what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do, we are not simply to consult our reason, or our feelings, or even our conscience, but the revelation which God has given us of His will and purposes concerning us. The error consists in putting aside the *Bible*, the great and only standard, and taking in its place, our *feelings*, our *impressions*—some *unpromised* and *uncertain inspiration*, as our guides in spiritual matters.

In the rule, this is rightly denominated, an “*enthusiastic doctrine* ;” for what is *enthusiasm* but a wild expectation of *visions*, or of *revelations*, not promised nor given, as a *higher* rule of action—yea, as the *only* rule of action, in abstaining from certain evils, and in performing certain duties, as though the will of God is not expressed at all in the Scriptures, or is not expressed with sufficient clearness and fullness, for the regulation of our life and conduct? Such a “*doctrine*” is as dishonoring to God, as it is subversive of all moral obligation. Well, therefore, are we required to “*trample it under foot*.”

We cannot be too often nor too impressively reminded, that the Bible is the only standard—the only chart along the coasts of time, the only lamp hung out to illumine our darkened pathway through this “waste, howling wilderness” to the beautiful land beyond, the only sure guide-book along the great thoroughfare of life. We cannot too well remember that whatsoever is not written in this blessed book, or plainly to be deduced

from it, “is not binding on our conscience, as a doctrine to be believed, or as a duty to be performed.” And, remembering all this, we should suffer ourselves to be guided by no *feeling*, no *impression*, come from what source it may, only as it is in harmony with the teachings of this *precious volume*.

NUMBER IX.

DOING GOOD TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH—DILIGENCE AND FRUGALITY—RUNNING THE RACE, ETC.

“By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own, and them only.”

As this rule has been so often and so unjustly censured by those who have *designedly*, or *undesignedly*, misapprehended its meaning, I may be allowed to discuss it more fully than otherwise I might be disposed to do.

The simple inquiry here, as elsewhere, is: Is the rule in accordance with the Divine teachings? If not, let it go; for in such case, no amount of Church authority can make it binding upon the conscience. If, however, it be in harmony with the Divine requirements, it cannot be dismissed; because it is then binding upon the conscience of all persons, not excepting those by whom it has been so bitterly denounced.

The first part of the rule is expressed in almost the very words of the Apostle Paul—"As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, *especially to them who are of the household of faith:*" Gal. vi., 10. The difference is that in the rule it is added: "*or groaning so to be.*" To understand by this, however, the mere emission of an audible sound, instead of the expression of an earnest desire and effort to become a part of "the household of faith," is to misrepresent, and Christian candor is not at variance with Christian charity, in saying, *willfully* to misrepresent its most obvious meaning. It would be just as well to denominate "the intercessions of the Holy Spirit with *groanings* which cannot be uttered," or the *groanings of* "the whole creation," "travailing together in pain," (see Rom. viii., 26 and 22,) as mere audible sounds, and not as figuratively expressing intense desire.

By the phrase "*groaning so to be,*" we very naturally, if not necessarily, understand an *intense desire* and an *earnest effort* to become Christians. And why should not all such be made the recipients of the good we are required to do, as well as those who are already Christians? Indeed, it would seem, other circumstances being equal, that they should have the preference, as they are equally reviled by the wicked, but without that spiritual strength which would enable them to withstand the temptations and to bear the afflictions of life.

There are those who seem to be greatly at a loss to know what to do with "*seekers of religion.*" They must not come within the Christian household. Though the "avenger of blood" is close after them, this "city of refuge" is not to be opened to them; but they must be left to perish without. How different was the conduct of

Christ! He stood with open arms, and invited them to come to Him. So anxiously concerned was He about them, that in closing up the volume of Divine Inspiration, He paused a moment, as if to have recorded these wonderful words—“And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” The Church is to join in the blessed invitation, and to strive, not to keep them out, but to bring them in. “And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely:” Rev. xxii., 17. It has ever been the glory of Methodism, that she has thrown open her doors, and, as “a bride” joined cordially with “the Spirit” in the invitation to sincere seekers of religion, “Come.”

As there can be no valid objection to the *Rule*, itself, when properly understood and explained, let us look at its exemplifications, and inquire what is wrong in them:

“*Employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, and helping each other in business.*”

“Oh!” some are ready to exclaim, “do you not see how these Methodists are *banded* together, for the purpose of helping each other in their *temporal* affairs, their *business* relations, as well as in their *spiritual* concerns? And if one is not a Methodist he has only to *groan* a few *deep groans* in order to secure their assistance, to get them to *buy* what he has to *sell*, or to *employ* him in *preference* to *others*!”

Omitting the sneer accompanying these expressions, it may be said, in reply to the question, itself: What if the Methodists were thus leagued together, and pledged mutually to help one another, where is the harm in it, especially when we go back to the time when the rule was adop-

ted? The *Methodists*, as they were at first derisively called, were as much despised by other *professing* Christians, as by the people of the world. Indeed, their chief persecutions in Great Britain and this country, were instigated by those who claimed to be the disciples of the merciful, all-loving Saviour. When, therefore, they were reviled and maltreated by other Churches and the world, and likely to obtain no assistance from the one source or the other, where was the impropriety, the great wrong, in seeking to help each other?

But this is a perverted view of the whole matter. A quotation from the Sacred Scriptures, ought in all fairness, to be taken in the sense in which it is there to be understood, unless the contrary unmistakably appears. The words—“*especially to them who are of the household of faith,*” are words used by the Apostle himself, and should be interpreted in the sense in which he employed them, as including all who are in possession of “the common faith.” This is obvious, in the present instance, from the reason assigned, “because the world will love its own, and them only.” If it had been said, “because other Churches do thus and so,” there would have been ground for the censure; but when the rule distinguishes, not between *Methodists* and other *Church members*, but between “*the world*” and “*the household of faith,*” there is not found the shadow of a reason for complaint.

Again: if a principle is to be determined by the practice of those who hold it, the rule I am considering has been most grossly misinterpreted. The *Methodists* do not confine their dealings to those of the same “faith and order,” any more than some of those Christian sects, who have no written rule upon the subject. They are very

much inclined to trade or to give employment where they can do best, or find the most accommodating terms, without much reference to the religious peculiarities of those whom they employ, or with whom they trade. If a merchant or other tradesman, if a blacksmith, or other mechanic, sets up in any community, with the expectation that, because he is a *Methodist*, he will, at least, obtain the patronage of the *Methodist* portion of the community, he will be sorely disappointed, if there is another tradesman or mechanic, who keeps better goods, or does better work, or who offers more reasonable terms. How should all this bring the blush of shame to those who, in *books* and *periodicals*, in *public lectures* and around the *fireside*, have so unscrupulously slandered a large and influential Christian denomination!

Our rule, then, when legitimately explained, requires us to do good, “especially to them that are of the household of faith,” and not to any particular section of the great Christian family, including those who are earnestly seeking to become Christians. Is it inconsistent with all right principle, and all right doing, for the members of the same family to prefer one another, to help each other in business, and to buy of one another rather than of strangers? How else can we do good to them *especially*?

Since our rule is unexceptional in itself, and in its exemplifications, and ascertained to be in conformity with Apostolic teaching, if any objection can be validly made, it must be to the reason assigned, “*Because the world will love its own, and them only.*”

We have here, however, the statement of a general fact, only more manifest at the time the rule was adopted than at the present time. A large portion of the civilized world professedly

honor our holy religion. They have had abundant evidence of its great power and transcendent excellence, in the good it has accomplished, is now accomplishing, and is calculated yet to accomplish. They respect those who adhere to it, and especially those whose lives give evidence of the sincerity of their professions. They would prefer, generally, to trade with them, and to have them in their employment, as, for various reasons, they would, in the present state of society, be of more benefit to them. But this has not always been the case. As it was in the days of the Apostles, and for many centuries afterwards, so it was in the times of Mr. Wesley, and of the pioneers of Methodism in this country, those who were more than ordinarily pious, if not all who made any pretensions to religion, were opposed and persecuted by the world, and unless they could obtain assistance from their brethren in the faith, from whom could they have expected to receive it? The fact as stated was then almost universal, at any rate, very general; but now, happily for us, and thanks to the increasing energies of the Gospel, is only occasional. The exceptions have become the general principle, and the general principle has become the exception.

But while I regard the exemplifications of our rule as proper and right, under the circumstances and the reason assigned as in consonance with the facts as they were then existing; yet in view of their liability to misapprehension, as indeed they have been misapprehended, whether intentionally or otherwise, and made to tell unfavorably in some quarters; in view also of the changed condition of society, rendering these specifications of the rule less essential; and especially in view of the fact that the Bible rule, as given by the Apostle Paul, is abundantly sufficient, and that all

which have been added are but at best mere human explications, and of force only as they come within the meaning of that higher law, I am free to confess that I should prefer the rule just as the Apostle gave it.

“By all possible diligence and frugality, that the Gospel be not blamed.”

Frugality is defined “prudent economy; a sparing use or appropriation of money and commodities; a judicious use of anything to be expended.”—Webster’s Dictionary.

Such being the meaning of the term, the rule evidently requires *diligence*, “all possible diligence,” frugality, “prudent economy” in all our worldly affairs.

Now, it will not be difficult to find advocates of the rule, as thus exhibited. Many, and I fear I may include some professors of religion, carry their views and their conduct, and especially their conduct, in reference to both diligence and frugality, to an extreme, are diligent in their temporal matters, even to the neglect of the *soul’s higher interest*, and are frugal in their expenditures, even to *parsimonious meanness*.

But it is not with the sayings and doings of men but with the teachings of the Bible that I now have to do. When our blessed Lord taught that we should “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” it is clearly implied that we are allowed, that it is even our duty to seek *secondly* or *subordinately*, the things which pertain to this life; that while we should not suffer ourselves to be over-anxiously concerned about what we shall eat, and drink, and wear; yet, in the providence of God, and with due reliance upon His truth and goodness, we should diligently seek

the necessities and even the comforts of life. When, too, the Apostle Paul said: "Bodily exercise profiteth little," it may be inferred that though of far less value than *godliness*, it does, nevertheless, when properly guarded, "profit" to some extent, or as it might be rendered for a *little while*. He taught, however, more directly, that while the Christian should be "fervent in spirit," he should also be "diligent in business." The duty of *proper economy*, is a natural resultant of that of *diligence* for why toil to make, if it is only for the purpose of wasting what is made in extravagant expenditures? Besides, it is included in all those exhortations, or commands to *temperance*——"moderation in all things."

Waiving other considerations, the reason assigned is enough to convince us of the Scripturalness of the rule, and the importance of observing it, "that the Gospel be not blamed." Scarcely anything would be a greater reproach to the Gospel than to suppose it taught or encouraged entire indifference to our worldly interests, and the temporal support and well being of those who have been committed to our care, *sloth*, *indolence*, *laziness*, on the one hand, or extravagance, wastefulness of our means on the other. As absorption in worldly pursuits, to the neglect of our spiritual interests, and an avaricious hoarding up of money or other things, are disgraceful to the Christian character; so idleness, neglecting to provide for our own household, and an extravagant expenditure of means which might be profitably employed, cause the Gospel to be blamed, bring the Christian religion into absolute disrepute; and, of course, it is not allowable to do the one or the other.

“By running with patience the race that is set before them, denying themselves and taking up their cross daily, submitting to the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.”

This rule, in all its parts, in all its expressions, and in all its requirements, is so manifestly in accordance with the Sacred Scriptures, that I need not discuss it, not, at least, in this place, for some parts of it have already been noticed, and others may come in hereafter.

NUMBER X.

ORDINANCES—PUBLIC WORSHIP—THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

I come now to the consideration of what are sometimes called *positive duties*, or *ordinances*—those which have not their foundation in the nature of things, but become duties simply because they are commanded by Him who has a right to our services, as distinguished from *moral duties*, or those which are founded in the nature of things, or may be reached by a process of reasoning.

To make this distinction clear: If there were no laws, human or Divine, against *stealing* or *murder*, although to *steal* or to commit *murder* would not be a *sin* or *crime*, yet by reasoning from the relationships we sustain to each other, we might infer that it is wrong to do the one or the other—a wrong to him whose property is stolen, or whose

life is taken, a wrong to society in general—that, consequently, it is our duty to refrain from such wrong actions, and mutually to assist one another; but we could not know that it is our duty, for indeed it would not be our duty to *worship God in any particular way*, to be *baptized*, or to *partake of the Lord's Supper*, unless we were *required* so to do.

While, however, it would not become our duty to do certain things, if not divinely required, yet, and this is the point at which I am aiming—when such requisitions are made, the obligation to do them is no less than to keep the commandments of the moral law. The consequences of disobedience in the one case, may not be so far-reaching and disastrous, as in the other; but the obligation remains the same. It was not the duty of Abraham to offer in sacrifice his son Isaac; until God *commanded* him to do it; indeed, without such commandment, it would have been a grievous sin; but when commanded, it became at once his duty to make the offering. Obedience in all cases is due from the creature to the Creator, from the preserved to the Great Preserver, from the redeemed to the all-glorious Redeemer, from the recipients of unnumbered favors to the Giver of all our blessings. Whatever He requires, whether approved by our judgment or contrary to our ideas of right, whether congenial with our feelings, or repugnant to our desires, it is our duty to do.

Let it not be inferred from any of the foregoing remarks, that the duties of which I am speaking, have been arbitrarily imposed. God is a perfectly reasonable Being; and although the reason of His doings may, in many instances, be not only above our utmost powers of comprehension, but altogether beyond the limits of legitimate inquiry, yet He never acts without reason.

As He is infinitely wise and good, a wise and good purpose or object must and *does* characterize all His proceedings—all the requisitions He makes of any of His creatures.

There is another important preliminary matter to be disposed of. It can be best reached by an induction. It is sometimes claimed that as "*Baptism is a positive institution*, none have a right to it except those who are *expressly* mentioned as having that right," and as infants are not thus explicitly mentioned, they have no right to baptism. This is the same as saying that parents are under no obligations to have their children baptized unless it is directly, or in so many plain words, declared to be their duty to do so; more generally, that the obligation to observe any "positive duty" rests wholly on some *explicit* declaration, as distinguished from *analogy*, *inference* and necessary *induction*. Those who thus assume and reason, seem not to be aware of the extent to which the argument reaches. If the premises be allowed, the conclusion is irresistible; but infant baptism is not the only thing affected by it. It would also exclude females—all females, however pious and devoted, from the communion table of the Lord—would destroy all obligation to observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath, to attend the preaching of the word, and possibly to "search the Scriptures." I do not intend, however, to enter into the details of the argument. I propose only to point out its fallacy. The error consists in making our obligations to depend on the *nature* of the evidence, whether *positive* or *inferential*, and not upon its *clearness* and *strength*. *Positive* declarations are not necessarily the strongest proof. I can conceive of an instance in which *inferential* evidence is the stronger. Were I to see a house on some desolate island, I should infer

that at some time a human being had been there. The conviction of my own mind would be more irresistible than if I had heard some one positively assert that he had seen a man on that island. Shall we limit God to our own prescribed method of confirming His requisitions? For what purpose has He given us reason, if we are not to exercise it in determining the duties we owe to Him? What difference can it make how I arrive at the conclusion, whether by direct testimony or by a process of induction, so that I am convinced that it is my duty to do certain things? Am I not under equal obligation to do them? Where is it written in the book, that while in morals I may exercise my judgment, yet in positive ordinances I am bound only by explicit declarations?

"It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence this desire of salvation."

"Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God."

An "*ordinance*" is something *ordained* or *instituted*. An "*ordinance of God*," is something *ordained* or established by Him. These ordinances as they are here enumerated, are: "*The public worship of God*," "*the ministry of the word, either read or expounded*," "*the Supper of the Lord*," "*Family and private prayer*," "*Searching the Scriptures*," and "*Fasting or abstinence*." Baptism, though really as much an ordinance as any of them, is not mentioned, because, doubtless, it is to be attended to but once by the same person; and those for whom these rules were intended were supposed to be already baptized. The first mentioned is

"The public worship of God."

To "*worship God*" signifies "*to pay Him divine honors*," "*to reverence Him with supreme*

respect and veneration." *The public worship of God, is reverence paid to Him publicly, by those assembled for that purpose, a public acknowledgment of Him, and of subjection to Him, and may include as to its acts, the singing of hymns and spiritual songs, and the offerings of prayer and thanksgiving.*

Late on the sixth day of creation man was made; but unlike other creatures of earthly mould, he was not only intelligent, but constituted a moral agent, and rendered capable of giving Him proper homage. The seventh day was the Sabbath, and "in it God did rest from all His labors;" wherefore He hallowed and blessed it. It was made for man, given to him as a day of rest, and set apart for God's holy worship. The Hebrews, when in possession of the promised Canaan, were required to meet together in one place—at first Shiloh, and afterwards Jerusalem, for the purpose of offering sacrifices in the name of the Holy One. The Jews, especially, on their return from Babylon, besides this temple of worship, built up synagogues, in which they worshipped God, thus, as if by anticipation, making a nearer approach to a spiritual worship. Christ honored these places with His presence, and used them in His public teaching. The Christians of Apostolic times were accustomed to meet for worship on the first day of the week; and the Sabbath was changed from the *seventh* day to the *first*. Ever since, this day has been devoted to the worship of God, and now on this glad day, thousands of Churches are opened for the assembling of His people, thousands of groves are rendered vocal with His praises, and thousands of people, in almost every part of the widespread earth, and on many of "the isles of the sea," unite in paying homage to the God that made them.

The economy of God as evinced under the for-

mer dispensation, the practice of the early Christians, the exhortation of the Apostle—"not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," and the promise of the Redeemer, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"—are abundantly sufficient to show the importance, the great value, the *scripturalness* of the public worship of Almighty God.

"The Ministry of the word, either read or expounded."

The reading of portions of God's holy word ought to be a part of public worship; and surely no argument can be needed to show that when His word is read, the people should reverently and attentively listen.

The duty of the people to hear "the word *expounded*," may not be directly taught, but it is obviously to be inferred. There are *correlative* duties—duties, if I may so express it, which flow out of other duties, or duties devolving upon one class of persons on account of duties required of another; as, for instance, when it is required of children to honor their parents, it is correlatively required of parents so to conduct themselves towards their children as to secure their proper reverence. God has made it the duty of some men to "preach the Gospel." The command, "Go ye therefore and teach," rather *disciple* "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," though given originally to the Disciples, the immediate followers of the Saviour, was intended through them, for all who, in succeeding ages, should be called to minister in holy things, as is manifest from the promise connected with it: "Lo! I am with you always"—literally *all*

days—"even unto the end of the world." Every one who is rightly a minister of Christ is "called of God." He does not *uncalled* assume the responsibilities of the ministry, nor can he voluntarily throw them off. It is *his duty to preach*. But how can he preach without hearers? To preach the Gospel is to proclaim, to herald forth the glad tidings of salvation through, or in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; but the proclamation would be useless if there were none to hear it. To preach the Gospel is to teach the truth of God as contained in His written word, to teach the way of life through faith in the Divine Redeemer; but the teacher cannot teach unless there are persons to be taught. Hence, while on the one hand, it may be asked, "How shall they *hear* without a *preacher*?" on the other it may be inquired, "How shall they *preach* without *hearers*?" It would be strange, therefore, if God should make it obligatory upon some men to *preach* without a corresponding obligation on the part of others to *hear*!

For the sake of greater explicitness I will change the nature of this discussion into the form of a direct address to all whose interests are involved. You, my brethren—friends, would consider the minister of Jesus as derelict in the performance of his duty, and as altogether inexcusable, were he, because it is not convenient, or because it is not agreeable to his feelings, or from some such consideration, to fail to deliver his message at the time and place appointed. You would not only be greatly disappointed, but you would severely and justly censure him, and, perhaps, resolve in your mind to go out no more to hear him. And yet, perhaps, you do not regard yourselves as equally derelict, as equally inexcusable, if you, for the same reasons, fail to attend his ministra-

tions. If it is his duty to *preach*, is it not your duty to *hear*? What privileges, if you esteem them as such, have you in this respect which others may not equally claim? If you may be allowed for slight causes, or as it may suit you, to stay away from the house of God, and the preaching of the word, others—all others, in like circumstances, may do so also; and if all were to act in this way, it would so happen, that the preacher, though called of God to preach the Gospel, would be left without hearers, or would be compelled to preach to lifeless walls and empty benches!

There are those who never seem to think of their obligations to hear “the preaching of the word.” They study only their own preferences or conveniences. If they like the officiating minister, or his preaching, if the preaching be eloquent or profound, or in some way adapted to their peculiar taste, or if some new preacher, or noted pulpit divine come along, they will go—will even put themselves to considerable inconveniences to attend; otherwise, they stay away altogether, or go only occasionally, as may best suit their inclination or convenience. They overlook the higher obligation. They forget that with the preaching, there is connected the solemn worship of God, in which they are bound to engage. They strangely forget, that whether the preacher be learned or otherwise, whether his preaching be eloquent or common place, their obligations to attend the house of God remain in full force. It is God’s message and not to minister’s they are called upon to hear; it is God’s worship and not that of the minister, they are required to attend; and they should beware how they suffer any considerations to come between them and their duty.

The obligation of all persons to hear the Gospel, may be also argued from the nature of the embassy. If the sovereign of a revolted province send an ambassador with a proclamation of the terms of pardon and reconciliation, it is the duty of the people to come together and hear the words of the proclamation. Whether the reasonableness of the terms may not involve the further duty of accepting them, is another question. It is beyond all controversy their duty to *hear*. “Now, then,” said the Apostle Paul, “we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God:” 2 Cor. v., 20. God hath chosen His ministers, and sent them forth as *His* ambassadors, to proclaim “the word of reconciliation;” and whatever may be said of the terms proposed—through God—they must be just what they ought to be, or whatsoever may be said of the duty of all to comply with these terms, and it cannot be doubted that it is their duty as well as their interest to do so, it is most certainly the duty of each and of all to come together to the place appointed, and *hear* the words to be spoken to them in the name of their Great Creator, the only Law-giver and rightful Sovereign of the universe.

NUMBER XI.

THE LORD'S SUPPER—ITS NATURE AND OBLIGATIONS.

In common with other Protestant Churches, the Methodist Church hold the *Lord's Supper* to be one of the only two sacraments instituted by our blessed Lord and Saviour. It is called *sacrament*, because in it we bind ourselves as by an oath, to be faithful to Him whose *body* and *blood* are symbolically presented. It is called also "the *Eucharist*," as it is a thank-offering to God for His wonderful mercy as manifested in the gift of His Son; and the *Communion*, as in it we hold communion with the Father, and with His Son, "the beloved." It is sometimes denominated the *Christian Passover*, as in the Christian system, it has taken the place of the Passover in the former dispensation. Once in the New Testament it is termed, as it is in the General Rules, "*the Lord's Supper*," for a reason sufficiently obvious. It was instituted by our blessed Lord on the sad night of His betrayal, at the close of the Paschal supper. Taking *bread* and giving thanks. "He brake it, and said, take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." After the same manner, also, He took the *cup*, when He had supped, saying, "This cup is the New Testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." "For," added the Apostle, whose words I have just quoted, "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come:" 1 Cor. xi., 23-26.

This important ordinance, though given at first to the immediate disciples of the Lord, was not to be confined to them. The Apostle Paul, who

had received it from the Lord, gave it to the Corinthians. It seems to have been generally observed in that day; and the same reasons that would render it important and necessary to the Christians *then* would render it important and necessary to Christians in all *succeeding ages*. until Christ should come again. That it should be frequently attended to, is obvious from the use of the term *oft* or *often*. If it had been intended to be kept once, or only two, or three, or four times a year, it would have been said, “*When* ye do this,” instead of “*As oft* as ye do this.”

To have a clear, comprehensive view of the sacredness of our obligation to observe this ordinance, we should have distinct ideas in reference to its nature and design.

It is a *commemorative* ordinance. “This do in remembrance of Me.” It brings vividly to our remembrance the sufferings of our precious Redeemer on the grued Cross of Calvary—causes us to think of His *body* slain, and His *blood* poured out for us, as an offering for *our* sins. Cold, indeed, must be the heart of him who can call to mind what *He* suffered and did for us, and not be filled with gratitude and love! And while it thus brings to remembrance His sufferings and death, it ought to remind us of our sins, and cause us to be utterly ashamed of them, and earnestly resolve to repent, and to lead a new life—“walking henceforth in all His holy ways.”

It is a *representative* ordinance. We have in it a *scenic* representation, a sort of pictorial illustration, a symbolical enactment of the Saviour’s sufferings and death. The *broken bread* portrays His *body* as if *broken* before us, and quivering in its mighty anguish; and the *wine poured out* shows His *blood* as *streaming* from His pierced side, a sure indication of his fearful death-struggle.

There is not only “a lively remembrance of His death,” but a vivid *representation* of it—“Ye do *show forth* the Lord’s death till He come.” Hence, the same Apostle said in another place, (Gal. iii., 1,) “O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, *before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*” Now, those Galatians had never seen Christ in the flesh. They were not present at His crucifixion, and beheld not His sufferings on the cross; but they had, in “the supper of the Lord,” a *symbolical representation*, in which He was “evidently set forth as crucified among them.”

It is a *prospective* ordinance. It not only calls to mind the fact of Christ’s suffering, it not only brings symbolically before us the body and the blood of Christ; but it looks forward to the second coming, “the glorious appearing” of the Saviour, and is itself an ever-recurring and prophetic declaration of that all-important event: “Ye do show forth the Lord’s death *till He come.*”

It is a *Christian* ordinance. I may be peculiar in the distinction which I make between a *Christian* and a *Church*, ordinance; but the distinction is an important one, especially in discussing the question of *close* or *strict*, and *open* or *free*, communion—understanding by the former the restriction of this sacrament to a class of professing Christians, and by the latter its extension to all Christian believers.

The argument in favor of restricted communion may be thus given: The sacrament of the Lord’s supper is a *Church* ordinance, and none but *Church members* are entitled to partake of it. *Baptism* is essential to Church membership; and, therefore, no *unbaptized* person is a member of the Church. *Immersion* is *baptism*, and *baptism* is *im-*

mersion, consequently, none have been *baptized* except those who have been *immersed*. Immersion itself is baptism only when it is administered by one who was *regularly immersed* by one who was *regularly immersed*, and so on, in some line of succession, reaching from John the Baptist, or some one of the Apostles, to the present time; and hence, none have been properly *immersed*, but those who have received it in this way. Now, as none are entitled to the Lord's Supper except *Church members*, and as none are *Church members* except those who have been *baptized*, and as none have been *baptized* but those who have been *regularly immersed*, and as none have been *regularly immersed* but those who were *immersed by one who is in the line of the succession*—therefore, none have a *right* to the table of the Lord except those who have been thus *regularly immersed*.

This is the argument in all its fullness, in all its parts and dependencies, occupying, as I intended it should occupy, an entire paragraph. Shall we examine it in all its minutiae? I apprehend it to be unnecessary. The *fallacy* may be seen with sufficient clearness in the starting point, and it serves to vitiate the whole.

Is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper an ordinance of the *Church*? and if so, of *what* Church and in what sense? It may be called a *Church ordinance* in the sense of its having been given to the Church for the use of Christ's disciples—and I will add, though seemingly out of place here, for all who are earnestly seeking to become Christ's, for all such are invited to Him, and this is, at least, one way of coming to Him; but it is not a Church ordinance in any such sense as would be of avail in the argument. It was ordained by *Christ* and not by the *Church*; it was designed for *His people*, that is, as I explain, for *all Chris-*

tians, and those who are earnestly seeking to become Christians, and not for *Church members*, simply regarded as such. Let us examine the argument closely,

If the Lord's Supper is in a strict and proper sense, an ordinance of the Church, then, of course, none but Church members are entitled to it. However clearly persons may exhibit in their lives the fruits of genuine discipleship, yet because they are not, in our view of it, members of the visible Church of Christ, we cannot invite them to the participation of this holy sacrament. They must connect themselves with what we regard as the Church, before they can be permitted to approach the Lord's—in this sense the *Church's*—table. It follows also as an inevitable consequence, that all whom we regard Church members, whatever may be the character of their lives, however clearly they may demonstrate by their conduct, that in truth they are not Christ's disciples, have the right to partake of this sacred ordinance; for their right is based upon their relation to the Church, and not upon the relation they sustain to Christ.

Let us take the other view: If the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a *Christian* ordinance, we have these very necessary conclusions: 1. None but Christians, or those who are sincerely seeking to become Christians, are entitled to the Lord's—in this case the *Lord's* and not the *Church's*—table. The mere fact of Church-membership does not give the right; for though members of the Church, yet if they are not disciples of the Saviour, or earnestly seeking to become such, they are not invested with any such rights. Hence, our Church does not invite them; for the invitation is to those only, who "truly repent of their sins, and are in charity with their neighbors, and

intend to lead a new life." 2. All Christians, or who exhibit in their conduct the fruits of a Christian life, are entitled to this holy sacrament; for their title is founded upon the relation they sustain to Christ, and not upon the relation they may sustain to the Church.

The advocates of restricted communion claim that in admitting only those whom they regard as *baptized* persons to the Lord's table, they act upon the same principle that others do. This, however, is an error. Their invitation is to all of "the same faith and order," and to those only. They freely admit that there are unworthy persons in their own Church or Churches, and that there are good Christians in other Churches. Hence, the invitation includes some whom they acknowledge to be unworthy, and excludes others whom they admit to be Christ's disciples, and is, therefore, based upon the relation they sustain to the Church as its members and not upon the relation they sustain to Christ, as His disciples. Other Churches, as, for instance, the Methodist Church, make a different issue; for the invitation is not to *Church members*, as such, but to the *followers of the Saviour*.

This is certainly not a distinction without a difference. Unless to be a member of a Church is identical with being a disciple of Christ, which ought to be, but, unfortunately, is not always the case, the distinction is a broad and important one. As an administrator of this blessed ordinance, I have nothing to do with the question, whether certain persons whom I esteem as Christians are properly members of the Church—of the one only true Church of Christ; but have simply to inquire, Do they belong to the Master? Are they the disciples of the Great Founder of this sacramental feast? If so, their right to the Master's

table, I dare not question. On the other hand, the advocates for restricted communion, are solely concerned with the insolvable question, who are properly baptized into the one true Church of Christ, upon the settlement of which their action is based, extending the invitation to all such, but confining it to them and to them only.

The scriptural reason for the "oft" partaking of this important sacrament has already been given. *Once a month on stations*, and *once a quarter on circuits* cannot be considered too often. It may be thought, however, that the frequent celebration of this Paschal feast, will render it too familiar—will cause it to lose much of its sacredness and importance. My own experience and observation are just the reverse of all this. Eight years of my ministry have been spent on districts where it became my duty well-nigh every Sabbath, to administer this ordinance; but instead of its becoming less interesting, or losing any of its sacredness, it seemed to be invested with new interest, and seemed to bring me nearer to the Saviour. Oh? how could one ever become wearied with frequent commemorations of the precious Redeemer's death, through which there is opened up to us the way of life! According to my observation, also, I have found that where the Lord's Supper is administered regularly once a month, there is the highest appreciation of it, and the largest proportional number of communicants; and that where it is irregularly or occasionally attended to, there it is least understood, and least appreciated.

Many, I am aware, are inclined to look upon the neglect of this sacrament as a *little matter*, as scarcely a sin at all, or if so, a *venial*, quite a *venial* offense. Is this correct? The Hebrew may have been tempted to regard the sprinkling of his door

posts with the blood of the slaughtered lamb a small matter. He might have reasoned that the destroying angel would know that *his* was a *Hebrew* house and family without the intervention of the *blood*. But just so sure as he had neglected it, the consequence to him would have been the loss of "his first-born," the strength of his life, and the stay of his declining years. The Jew, throughout the whole of his history, might have been disposed to look upon it as matter of indifference, whether or not he observed the feast of the passover; but just so certain as he neglected it was he to be cut off from "the congregation of the Lord's people." Is it a light thing for us to treat with indifference or neglect, the sacred symbols of the Saviour's body and blood? to refuse to obey His almost dying request? to slight Him in His ordinance? Oh! no; it is not a *little* thing, a *venial* offense, but a *great* and *fearful sin*, involving consequences as wide and far-reaching as the eternal future!

NUMBER XII.

PRAYER—FAMILY AND PRIVATE.

"Family and private prayer."

The lamented Montgomery, in one of his beautiful hymns, wrote:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed.

This is, however, more beautiful as poetry, than it is correct as a definition. Prayer is something more than *unexpressed* desire. Our blessed Lord said: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." In the Sacred Scriptures we frequently read of *acts* of prayer. Now, it is a confounding of terms to make the *desire* for any good identical with the act of *asking* for it. *Prayer* may be more correctly defined, *the desire of the heart expressed in the form of a petition*.

Prayer is the *desire of the heart*. Although *desire* in itself simply is not prayer, yet it is essential to prayer, at any rate to *success* in prayer. In vain may we ask for things which we do not want; and yet, how many, alas! ask for things for which they have no desire. They repeat the words, or go listlessly through the forms of prayer, while their hearts are not in the petitions so well expressed.

Prayer is the *desire of the heart expressed in the form of a petition*. I insist upon this latter part of the definition, not only as important, but as absolutely essential to prayer. There are those, and members of the Church, too, who never pray. They say they earnestly desire certain blessings,

but contend that there is no use in asking for them, because God, who knows their desire, will, if it please Him to bestow the blessings desired, bestow it as well unasked for as if earnestly solicited. Now this, I would say, is "being wise above that which is written." He who "knew all things" said—"Ask, and it shall be given," and this implies the necessity of *asking* as a condition, and shows conclusively that prayer is something more than mere desire.

God is *omniscient*: wherefore, then, is the use of prayer? Can we instruct God? Can we tell him anything, even in respect of ourselves, which He does not already know? Certainly not. Yet, while it is true that God knows all our thoughts and desires better than we can possibly express them, we may still see a reason why we are required to pray for such things as we need and desire.

Suppose that as parents it is important to impress upon the minds of our children their dependence upon us for what they have and enjoy. While in the exuberance of our love we might bestow upon them many things unasked, yet we would reserve a large number to be obtained only by their asking for them. Now God is an all-loving, but at the same time an all-wise Father. While in the greatness of His kindness He bestows, unasked, many blessings upon His children, yet, in order to teach them their entire dependence upon Him as the Giver of all good, there are many others to be had only on the condition of their being asked for.

Without any solicitations on our part, God has bestowed upon us countless blessings; and we, perhaps, have been in the habit of receiving and enjoying them, without one grateful remembrance of the kind hand that supplies our constantly re-

curring wants. Were He to bestow all His favors in this way, we should become as unmindful of the gifts of His grace, as we have shown ourselves to be of the vast benefactions of His providence. It is in kindness, therefore, as well as in wisdom, that He requires of us to *ask*, in order that we may *receive*.

Again: God is *immutable*. Why, then, need we pray? Can we, by our prayers, *change* His purposes? No: but what are His *purposes*? Is it His purpose to give us the things we need, whether *asked* or *unasked*? If so we shall receive them without any effort on our part to obtain them. But if it be His purpose to impart certain of His gifts only when we *ask* for them, we certainly shall not receive them unless we *do* ask for them. If to withhold blessings *unconditionally* promised until some *condition* is complied with, would indicate a change in the divine will or purpose; so to bestow certain blessings promised *conditionally*, when the condition is not complied with, would also show a change in the mind of God. Since, then, it is written, "*Ask, and ye shall receive,*" the very *immutability* of God makes it incumbent upon us to *ask* in order that we *may receive*.

Without, however, further enlargement on this particular point, it should suffice to say, that God who best understands His own character and attributes, the nature and necessities of human beings, and the operation and effects of His own laws, has commanded us to pray; that it has pleased Him to make some of His most important blessings depend upon our asking for them; and that, consequently, it is reasonable and altogether right, and even necessary that we should pray to Him.

The main point being thus established, I may be

allowed briefly to notice one or two things of less significance and importance.

Posture. While no particular *posture* can be claimed as absolutely essential to prayer, it is not, therefore, to be regarded as a matter of indifference. That *posture* which best becomes a finite, frail human being in approaching the great and glorious infinite and Holy One, and which is most promotive of humility, reverence and proper devotional feeling, is certainly the most suitable.

In the Sacred Scriptures we read most commonly of *kneeling*, seldom of *standing* and never of *sitting*, as a posture of prayer. It is said that Solomon *stood* when he offered the prayer at the dedication of the temple; but in the parallel passage, it is said that he *kneeled*. The two passages are easily reconciled by supposing that, instead of prostrating himself, as was the custom of the heathen, he *stood upon his knees*. Stephen "*kneeled*" down in offering his last prayer. Peter "*kneeled* and prayed" when he raised Tabitha from the dead. Twice it is recorded of Paul and his company "he *kneeled*," "we *kneeled*," while in speaking of himself he said, "*I bow my knees*." More than all, it is said of Him, the Blessed One, that, during the fearful agony in the garden, "He *kneeled* down and prayed." Matthew says, "He fell upon His face," and Mark, that "He fell upon the ground," but neither of these is incompatible with a *kneeling* posture. I am aware that "the Pharisee *stood*," but there is nothing in his example worthy of imitation: The Pharisees generally loved to pray "*standing* in the synagogues." The "publican" also *stood*; but it is mentioned as indicative of his position in the temple, "he stood *afar off*." However, I make no special objection to standing with those who think it right; and invariably occupy that position when worshipping

with those whose custom it is stand. I do, however object to *sitting*, unless when unavoidable, as it manifests the want of all proper respect.

Forms of prayer. If the words used in prayer express only the desire of the heart, it can make no material difference whether they are words of our own origination, or those furnished by others, though almost every one can find appropriate language for expressing a heart-felt want. In conducting family prayer, especially if the leader of the services be, from any cause, incapable of indicting a suitable prayer, there can be no impropriety in his using a form provided for such occasions. Forms of prayer are objectionable only when they lead to *formalism*, to the mere speaking of words, or the utterance of sentiments, or the *saying* of prayers, when there is no earnest desire for the blessings so well, it may be so eloquently, asked for. They may be proper, and even beneficial, when employed as aids to devotion, when they help us to lift our thoughts to God, and kindle in our hearts a burning desire for the blessings needed.

Family Prayer. It must be admitted that there is no *direct* Scripture authority, no "thus saith the Lord," for *family prayer*; but it is strongly to be *inferred*; and it, therefore, equally becomes a duty.

During the patriarchal age, the father, or the head of the family, seems to have been the officiating priest in his own household. Hence, in the journeyings of some of them, we read that when they stopped at a place, and spread their tents, the first thing they did was to erect an altar for the purpose of sacrifice and offerings: Gen. viii., 20; xii., 8; xiii., 18; xxvi., 25. The Israelites, during the time they were in the wilderness, were organized as a large family connection, and

priests were appointed to offer the daily offerings; and, subsequently, we read of “the morning and evening sacrifice:” 2 Chron. xiii., 11; 1 Kings xviii., 29, 36. Jeremiah prayed the Lord to “pour out (His) fury upon the heathen that knew (Him) not, and upon the families that called not upon (His) name:” Jer. x., 25. Now, a prayer like this was but the utterance of a prophecy, and to call upon the Lord’s name was to offer prayer to Him. Hence, we may render, “The fury of the Lord will be poured out upon the families that pray not unto Him.”

In view of what has been said, it would appear strange, if the more enlightened and more spiritual system of the Gospel required no family offerings. It seems to be a necessary inference that every Christian family should have its altar—*spiritual* now—and offer its spiritual oblation.

But let us take another view. It is manifestly the duty of all parents to “bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and, without question, they should avail themselves of everything which will aid them in the performance of this duty. Now, it would be difficult to conceive of anything which could give them more efficient aid than *family prayer*. Children are eminently *practical*, they are influenced much more by *example* than by *precept*, by what they *see* in others, than by any *abstract teachings*. The daily reading of the Scriptures, and the regularly offered prayers of the father, to which I may add the singing of some appropriate hymn, will have an effect upon the children, will be longer, more impressively, and more profitably remembered by them, than the most beautiful and glowing explications of doctrine and duty.—will be treasured in their memory long after those explications will have faded away, and long after

the parents themselves will have gone from the world. Why is it that so many look back with pleasurable emotions to the scenes of their childhood? They have vividly in remembrance not only "the old oaken bucket," and "old arm chair," but also the family altar, the precious lessons read, the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," sung by loved ones around the fireside, and "the prayer of the sire as a sweet invocation" going up unto the Lord. Oh! it is sad to look back upon a broken hearthstone, and a disrupted family circle, and to remember that there existed no altar there, that no God was publicly acknowledged and faithfully worshipped, that no tokens of a religious faith can be called up from the sepulchred past, nothing but an occasional or more regular going to Church on the holy Sabbath!

But why talk of *duty*? It is enough for a truly Christian heart to know that it is his *privilege* to build up an altar to God, to call around it his loved ones, and with them to sing praises and offer the prayer of faith. He pauses not to ascertain with entire definiteness what the stern voice of duty says, he certainly waits not until the case is so clearly made out as to leave no room for doubt; but he eagerly inquires: "May I do it?" "Oh! is it my high prerogative to bring these precious children that God has given me, these loved one around whom the tendrils of my heart's warm affection so closely entwine, in whose present well-being and future and eternal happiness I am so deeply interested, to the altar of my God, and invoke his blessings upon them, in the name of the glorious Redeemer who died for me and them?"

Shall we contemplate a family in which there has never been an altar, or in which if one ever

existed, it has fallen down and gone into decay? Or a family upon whose altar no living fire burns, where the father, as officiating priest leads no longer the devotions of the family circle? Surely, it cannot be a matter of wonder that the children of such a family, grow up in ignorance of God, and with a disrelish for sacred things; that they are found in after-life outside of the pales of the Church, and unsaved by faith in Christ; that so much of difficulty is experienced in seeking to bring them under the benign influences of our holy religion, that they resist to the last the overtures of divine grace, pass away from the world, and go into eternity with the blackness of despair gathering around them! Oh! when will parents be made wise to understand, and appreciate, and promote the best interests of their children!

I am aware that family prayer may be irksome. If, as I have known, the leader of the devotions put it off until a late hour, until the children are sleepy and ought to be in bed, if he spell his way through one of the longest chapters in the Bible, if he sing *five* or *six* stanzas of some long-meter hymn to a *slow* tune, and if he then pray a *long* prayer, some *fifteen, twenty* or *thirty* minutes in length, it will be irksome—*irksome* to the children and to everybody else; but if he select an *early hour*, read a *short* lesson from the Scriptures, letting the children read consecutively with him, sing *two* or *three* stanzas of some suitable hymn, and offer a *short* prayer, say *two* or *three* minutes in length, most children will be interested, pleased, and greatly benefited.

NUMBER XIII.

THE SCRIPTURES—REASON WHY WE SHOULD SEARCH THEM.

"Searching the Scriptures."

It may be thought that what is here said is but the explicit command of the blessed Saviour, and almost in His own words. But this is not clear. While, in our English version we read—"*Search the Scriptures:*" John v., 39,—the original may be just as well rendered "*Ye do search the Scriptures;*" and the circumstances seem to justify the latter rendering. Besides, if a command, it was addressed directly and personally to the unbelieving Jews, with special reference to His Messiahship.

The duty of "searching the Scriptures," to those, especially, who accept them as "the Volume of Divine inspiration," can require no proof. The fact that they claim to be the Word of God, to teach His will concerning us, what we are to do, and what we are not to do, and how we are to live so as to please God, and get to heaven, shows beyond all possibility of cavil, that it is our duty, our imperative duty, closely to read and study them.

In order, however, to impress this duty, I shall proceed to give other reasons than the all-commanding one just referred to, why we should "*Search the Scriptures.*"

1. *The information they afford us, especially in reference to our future destiny, our spiritual and eternal well-being.*

I find myself in the world; but whence came I, and what is to be my destiny? I look around me

and behold my fellow-beings sicken and die, I see them borne away one after another to the gloomy prison-house of the dead. I, too, am mortal, I, too, must soon be as they. What, then, is to become of me when I am dead and gone? Am I to fall into the grave, and is that to be the end of me? Am I to live, and feel, and think, and act no more forever? Or is there reserved for me an eternal future, and if so, what is to be my condition in that future? These are questions which find answers nowhere else except in the Holy Scriptures. Ought I not therefore, diligently to read and study them?

Again: Something within me whispers that all is not as it should be. Some secret monitor tells me that I am a sinner, that I have violated the holy law of the Great Being who made me, and that I am condemned by that law, and exposed to its fearful penalties. How am I to obtain relief? Where shall I find expiation and pardon? "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah vi., 6, 7. As a sinner, condemned to the second and eternal death, the question comes along with accumulated interest—How can God be just, and yet extend mercy to a sinner such as I am? This is a grave problem, and one whose solution philosophy cannot give. She can analyze man's physical structure, and develop the process of human thought, she can follow man through life, and even down into the grave, and behold his body mouldering back to its original elements; but she cannot tell what becomes of that living,

thinking principle, by which awhile ago it was animated and sustained; nor can she explain by any power which she possesses, "how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Well may we thank God for the Bible, which comes in right here, and gives us the very information we need. Here we learn that although man has sinned, yet God hath found a ransom, that the blessed Lord and Saviour, "the everlasting Son of the everlasting Father," has made a willing, all-sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the world, and that through Him, through faith in His name, we may be saved from our sins in this life, and obtain an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," in the world to come.

2. Another reason I may give why we should search the Sacred Scriptures is, *their excellence*.

— The Bible, considered as a mere human composition, is an exhaustless source of the purest intelligence. "Where shall we find such purity of morals, such exalted conceptions of the Deity, such elevated and ennobling sentiments, such important history, as are contained in this blessed Book?" Without any reference, therefore, to its Divine originality, it very justly claims our earnest attention.

But when it is regarded as the will of God to man, whose present well-being, whose future and eternal happiness is closely interwoven with every part, it assumes an importance of the most momentous character. The claims which it sets up, as the only rule of right, the nature of the truths it discloses—*truths* which are to be found nowhere else, and the intimate connection it has with our present and future well-being, our eternal happiness—all, *all* conspire to render it the most interesting and important book the world ever saw,

fully justify the injunction—“*Search the Scriptures,*” and justly entitle it to the name which, by way of eminence, it has received, the *Scriptures*, the *Writings*, the *Bible*, the *Book*, emphatically **THE WRITINGS—THE BOOK!**

Their excellence will further appear, if we consider *the blessings we receive by means of them*. And without dwelling on this, let it suffice to say, that all the blessings we enjoy, not shared in common with us by the heathen world, are owing directly or indirectly to this precious Book. This is a proposition easily susceptible of proof. Let any one take a map of the world, and a pencil, and let him draw lines around those countries upon which the Bible sheds its light and influence, and he will find that his lines inclose, not only the most civilized, but the only truly enlightened portions of our globe. In some maps I have noticed an enlightened state of society is denoted by an *open book*, and Protestantism, the purest—indeed, I may say, the only *pure* form of Christianity—is represented by a *star*. Now, if any will take the trouble to examine, they will ascertain that the *star* and the *book* go together, that where the *star* shines most brightly, that is where Protestant Christianity exists in its purest forms, as in Great Britain and this country, is to be found the highest state of civilization and enlightenment. As we recede from these lines the shadows begin to thicken, and when we go beyond the pales of Bible light and influence, we become at once enveloped in the darkness of a moral night. Even in Roman Catholic countries, where the holy light of the Gospel is blended with the lurid glare of a thousand superstitions, there is at least *twilight*. Mohammedism borrows all it has of value from the Bible, which it acknowledges, while contending that it has been superseded by the religion of

Mohammed; but even in those countries upon which the *crescent* sheds its pale, cold light, where are to be found only a few stray leaves of the Bible, a few shreds of Divine truth, total darkness is prevented.

The excellence of the Sacred Scriptures will still further appear, if we consider the *blessings* which would result from *the universal observance of their precepts*. Just let us think of the benefits which would accrue to the world from the keeping of that one law of the Saviour,—“As ye would therefore, that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them:” Matt. vii., 12. Confidence would be restored among men; and when we reflect how much unhappiness is caused by the want of confidence in our fellow-beings, this itself would be a benefit unspeakably great.

Let me give an illustration: Two men, it is said, were once traveling somewhere in the far west. Night overtook them when, as they thought, they were far away from any human habitation. But they came presently to a cabin, and asked and obtained permission to remain during the night. Conversing together before retiring they could not think what had caused that man to settle there in the wilderness. They came to the conclusion that he was a robber; perhaps a murderer, and expected to pay dearly for their night's lodging. One of our travelers was a Christian, the other an infidel. They retired early; and from the place they occupied they could see what was transpiring in the other room. After awhile they saw the man of the house arise from his seat and go to a shelf, and take down—not a *bloody bowie knife*, not some *death-dealing pistol*—but an “old family Bible.” He read awhile from its sacred pages, and then kneeled and offered a fervent prayer, and among others for those two way-far-

ing men. Now, what was the effect? The Christian, of course, was at once relieved, for he had found a brother in those western wilds. But how was it with the infidel? How would it have been with him, if this man, instead of reading the Scriptures had read aloud some *infidel* writing? It is easy to perceive that this would only have increased his fears; for though he too would have found a *brother*, he would been afraid of no one so much as that *brother*. How *did* he feel when he heard this man read from the Bible—that Book which he had affected so much to despise? He turned to the Christian and said, “I feel as if a mountain weight were rolled off from my bosom.”

Yes; were the principles of the Bible universally observed, we should indeed have a happy world. Individual quarrels, family bickerings, neighborhood broils, national dissensions, would cease, and war and bloodshed would be known no more. “The wilderness and the solitary place would be glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose:” Isa. xxxv., 1. Peace, and joy, and righteousness, would spring up everywhere, and there would be a renovation of the whole face of the moral world.

But deeper than all this must be sought the intrinsic excellence of the Bible. It is “*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*” Wherever it goes, it carries with it, not only a high commanding moral influence, but a soul-regenerating power. By it the spiritually *blind* are enabled to *see* the things which make for their peace and happiness; by it the spiritually *deaf* are made to *hear* the words of eternal life; by it the spiritually *dumb* are made to *speak* forth the praises of the living God; by it the spiritually *lame* are made to “*walk and leap and praise God;*”

by it the spiritually *insane* are brought to their *right* minds; by it the spiritually *dead* are brought to *life* again. It shines all along the pathway of life, throws a halo of divine blessedness around the bed of death, lights up the darkness of those regions where the bodies of the sainted dead are at rest, and opens up to the eye of faith the brightness and the ever-enduring glories of the Christian's Heaven.

3. I will only add, as the last reason I shall offer why we should search the Holy Scriptures, the fact that *we are to be judged in the final day, according to the things written in them*. They contain the *will* of God; the will of God concerning us, and by them we are to stand or fall in the day of fearful reckoning. And when it is remembered that we are fast passing through the scenes of this present life, that we are hastening on with rapid steps to death, to the grave, to the judgment, and that we shall be adjudged to heaven or condemned to hell, accordingly as we obey or neglect to obey the requisitions of God's Holy Book—how important, how beyond all possible conception, important to "Search the Scriptures," so that we may become thoroughly acquainted with our duty. our whole duty, and by a faithful performance of our duty, through faith in the all-atoning merits of our precious Redeemer, we may be prepared to hear the blessed commendation of the Judge Eternal!

If such be the reasons why we should search the Sacred Scriptures, how much is that man to be pitied who openly contemns, and inwardly and persistly rejects them, and who, in the exuberance of his wrath, would destroy them! Oh! it is to act the part of the base assassin who seeks the life's blood of his best friend! Yea, worse: it is to act the base part of the inhuman wretch

who seeks to plunge his murderous knife into the bosom of his own mother. To reject the Scriptures is to reject the God who gave them,—is to reject the salvation which they offer,—is to reject the eternal life which they unfold,—is to reject the Heaven to which they invite!

But what shall be said of those who, while they admit the sacred Scriptures to be the inspired word of God, refuse or neglect to study or even to read them, and suffer them to have no practical influence upon their conduct. They are more inconsistent still. What, believe the Bible, and yet never consult it to know what it teaches! What! Embarked upon the great unknown sea of life, where shoals and sand-bars, and opposing currents so largely abound, and yet have no pilot aboard, no chart to consult no compass to direct to the port to which they are bound—or a pilot whose guidance is not asked, a chart which is not consulted, a compass whose points are neither understood nor cared for! Can we think of absurdity greater? Perhaps it may be found in that professing Christian who can pour from morning until night, and waste the midnight oil, over the *sentimental novel*, some *fictitious tale of woe*, some *sickly romance*, while the *Book divine* lies upon the book-shelf, or the centre-table, *unopened, unread, unstudied*. He not only professes to *believe* the Bible, but to be *governed* by it; and yet he never seeks to know what those principles are by which his life is to be governed!

“*Search the Scriptures.*” *Search*—they are an inexhaustible source of the purest intelligence, to secure which you must closely search every part. *Search*—they are a mine of the richest, purest metal, to obtain which you must dig deep and toil hard! *Search*—they are an incorruptible fount of happiness, to realize which you must follow

the stream to its divine source! *Search*—they are a lamp, a light, to behold which you must labor hard to clear away the mist that obscures your present vision! “SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.”

NUMBER XIV.

FASTING, ITS PROPER MEANING AND USE.

“*Fasting or Abstinence.*”

It is not clear whether *abstinence* is here employed as a term explanatory of that of *fasting*, or whether it was intended to denote something that may be used in the place of *fasting*. The latter is most probably the meaning, and seems to be more in accordance with the usage of the Church. In either case, however, it appears to have been improperly appended. *Fasting* is not simply *abstinence* from food. *Abstinence* is not *all* that is meant, or even that which is *particularly* meant by *fasting*. It cannot be substituted for *fasting* unless a *part*, and, in this instance, the least important part can be substituted for the whole.

The distinction usually made in *practice*, whatever it may be in *theory*, is *fasting* or *abstinence from all food*, for a single meal, or for a day, or for some indefinite length of time; and that *abstinence* is a *partial* fasting, the abstaining from *some food*, or from *particular kinds* of food. But *fasting* is a religious service, and is to be understood in a sort of *technical* sense. It is not mere *abstinence* from food, whether in whole or in part, whether

for a shorter or longer period, though this may be one of its concomitants. It is, as a religious service, immediately and inseparably connected with *mourning* on account of sin, serious religious meditation, and prayer. As when the soul is deeply afflicted there is no desire for food, so *voluntary fasting* becomes the external exponent of an *inward mourning*. Where this mourning on account of sin is not found, there is the absence of the true scriptural idea of fasting; and all such abstinence from food is of no more avail—is no more acceptable to God, than the self-flagellations, the long and perilous pilgrimages, and other penances of the monks and nuns of the middle ages.

In turning our attention to the Old Testament Scriptures, we find no example of fasting up to the time of Moses. Moses fasted forty days, so also Elijah was forty days without food. These fasts, however, were miraculous, and teach nothing in reference to *fasting* as a religious duty. On the great day of atonement, it was commanded that the people “were to do no work, and to afflict their souls; and most probably, though it is not so asserted, there was to be the outward sign, viz: *fasting*.”

Fasting seems to have been common among the Israelites subsequent to the times of Moses; but these fastings were altogether unacceptable to God, unless there were more than mere abstinence from food and the appendages of “sackcloth and ashes.” Hence, in answer to the questions, “Wherefore have we *fasted*, say they, and Thou seest not? Wherefore have we *afflicted our souls*, and Thou takest no knowledge?” it is answered, “Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, or exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Ye shall not fast as ye do this day to make

your voice be heard on high. Is it such a fast as I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day unto the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and hide not thyself from thy own flesh?" Isa. lviii., 3-7.

The heathen also *fasted*. When Jonah walked the walls of Nineveh and proclaimed, "Yet forty days, and this great city shall be destroyed," the king of Nineveh decreed: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, take anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, and let them turn every one of them from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn from his fierce anger?" Even this heathen king saw that more than *mere abstinence from food* was necessary; for he connected with it earnest prayer and thorough repentance. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not:" Jonah iii., 5-10.

It is, however, to the New Testament that we are to look for instruction in reference to the meaning and obligation, and especially the *obligation* of *fasting*. "It does not appear by our Saviour's own practice, or any commands He gave to His disciples, that He instituted any particular fasts, or enjoined any to be kept out of

pure devotion:" *Cruden's Large Concordance*. Still, as He gave directions concerning *fasting*, Matt. vi., 16-18, foretold that when He the Bridegroom should be taken from His disciples they would *fast*, Matt. ix., 15, and said of a certain evil spirit, "this kind goeth not out but by *fasting* and prayer: Matt. xvii., 21; and as His followers, or at least some of them, practiced fasting, Acts xiii., 2-3; xiv., 23, it may be inferred that on proper occasions, *fasting*, with prayer and faith, is a Christian duty. Let us, therefore, glean all we can concerning its true nature, and its necessary concomitants.

On one occasion, "the disciples of John"—Mark combines the disciples of the Pharisees with those of John—came to our blessed Lord, and said: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" Matt. ix., 14, and Luke, v., 33, makes the question this: "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the Pharisees, but Thine eat and drink?" From this it is manifest that it was customary to connect *prayer* with *fasting*, and that *fasting* with them was *abstinence* from *eating* and *drinking*. Our Lord, say Commentators, *excused*, I would prefer to say, *justified* His disciples on two grounds:

First, on the ground of His being present with them. "Can the children of the bride-chamber *mourn* while the bridegroom is with them? but the days come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they *fast*." It is to be observed here that the Saviour *identifies*, or at any rate, very closely *connects* *fasting* with *mourning*. I am aware that both Mark and Luke represent our Lord as asking: "Can the children of the bride-chamber *fast*," etc.? But according to all the rules of just criticism, we must suppose

that Matthew employed the identical word used by Christ, as we cannot otherwise account for its introduction, while it is easy to account for the term used by the other two, as *that* constituted the subject of the enquiry. The meaning is, that it would have been as much out of place for the disciples to *fast*, (involving the idea of *mourning*,) while He was yet with them, as it would have been for "the children of the bride-chamber" to *mourn* in the presence of the bride-groom; but the days were coming when He should be taken from them, and then they would *fast*, as then they would have cause for *mourning*.

The other ground on which Christ justified His disciples, according to Expositors, was, that they were as yet, *new* disciples, *raw* recruits, and it would not do to place *too heavy a burden* upon them at the *first*. The Pharisees and John's disciples were *accustomed* to these rigid observances; but Christ's disciples were as yet *undisciplined*. This view I am compelled to reject, although Scott says that all the Commentators were in favor of it, he himself, giving a different view, and one so nearly in consonance with the opinion I had formed, that had I seen it before reaching any conclusion of my own, I should, perhaps, have given it in his own words. Our Lord, as I think, justified His disciples, in the second place, on the ground, that the Kingdom which He came to set up, the purely spiritual religion which He came to unfold, was not to be burdened with such services. In a system abounding in types and shadows, where spiritual things were taught with so much of figure, these frequent fastings were allowable; but it would be both incongruous and unsafe to continue these burdensome rites or ceremonies in the Christian system, as *incongruous* and as *unsafe* in a *spiritual* point of view, as it would

be in *temporal things*, to “put a piece of new,” or undressed “cloth upon an old garment,” or to “put new wine into old bottles,” “the rent would be made worse,” “the bottles would break, and the wine would run out.” He further taught, as recorded by Luke, that just as sure as a man having drank “old wine” would not prefer “the new,” saying, “the old is better,” just so surely would those who once realized the blessedness of His own purely spiritual religion, prefer it to any system He might then devise, having engrafted upon it these burdensome services. His religion is properly comparable to “the old wine.” It began in the prophetic promise, as announced in Eden’s garden, continued through the patriarchal services, and the more cumbrous observances of the Mosaic economy, and having been refined upon these *lees*, came forth *bright*, and *sparkling* and *pure*, in the personal teachings of the precious Redeemer.

Whence, or how the idea originated, that God would or could be well pleased with the mere act of *abstaining* from food, or from particular kinds of food, partially or entirely, for a single meal or for a day, or throughout a certain season, unless performed in obedience to His will, as expressed or clearly implied in His written word, it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive. The heathen were in the habit of *cutting their flesh*, *pulling out their hair*, *severely* lacerating their bodies, and of inflicting upon themselves corporeal sufferings, thinking thereby to *propitiate* their deities, to excite the *pity*, the *compassion* of their gods: See 1 Kings xviii., 28. But whence did they derive the bloody practice?

Rigid *fastings*, accompanied with the putting on of sackcloth and ashes, or other external signs of mourning, were more in place in a system of

symbolisms, as was that of the Jews; but it is altogether inconsistent with the mild, the all-merciful, the far more spiritual kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. But even in the former Dispensation, all such fastings, where *repentance* and *faith*, and *prayer* were wanting, were, as seen in the quotations already made, utterly repugnant to the Lord Almighty. Let us beware how we attempt to burden the truly beneficent system of the gospel with any such incongruous observance!

"When ye fast," said our Lord to His disciples, "be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly:" Matt. vi., 16, 18. From this direction of the Saviour, and that other expression, "then shall they fast," it sufficiently appears that there are times and occasions when it is both proper and right that we should fast, though it should be a season of mourning on account of sin, or of the absence of the ever-blessed Bridegroom, and accompanied with repentance and prayer. There should be no *display*, "no *appearing unto men* to fast," none of the mere outside appendage of mourning, which like the drapery of the bereaved, become offensive in its very exuberance and finish.

I have nothing to object to the call of a nation to *fasting*, *humiliation* and *prayer*, in a time of national calamity, as when the permanence and well-being of the country are imperiled, or when great national sins are prevalent. I have nothing to object to a call of the same kind from the Church, considered as a whole, or in any of its

parts, when the presence of the Master is not manifest; and *Church evils, backslidings, religious declensions*, call for *mourning, repentance* and *prayer*. Nor have I anything to object to an individual person's setting apart a day for the same purpose, when he truly *mourns* the absence of Him whom "his soul loveth;" but it should be a *fast* in *sincerity*, "in *deed* and in *truth*," and not in *appearance* only.

The setting apart of certain days of the year, as the first Fridays in May and September, or in any other month or months, the Friday before each quarterly meeting, or every Friday, (of course I cannot tell why *Friday*, rather than any other day, is selected,) or the setting apart a certain season, as that of Lent, as days or times of "fasting or abstinence," and regularly to be observed as such, receives, to say the least, no encouragement, either from the teachings and example of the blessed Saviour, or of His Apostles. How can it be known, but that at the very time or times appointed for the fast, there may be, with the Church at large, or with particular sections or portions of it, abundant reason, on account of the *presence* of the glorious Bridegroom, for *rejoicing* rather than for *mourning*! "Can—is it proper, in harmony with the occasion—the children of the bride chamber *mourn—fast*—as long as the bride-groom is with them?" But the days come—may come, when "the Bridegroom will be taken away," or will leave: Then let the *fast* be proclaimed, attended to; for then there is, or ought to be, corresponding *sorrow* in the heart; and *fasting*, and *mourning*, and *deep humiliation*, *thorough repentance*, *unceasing prayer*, well become us.

In any case, and in all cases, there is to be no disfigurement of the face, no putting on of sack-

cloth, no self-imposed penances, or self-inflicted sufferings—no pomp, no show—nothing manifested or done for mere appearance sake; but the face is to be washed, the head is to be anointed, every external sign is to be removed, so that we may not appear unto men to *fast*, but unto “the Father who seeth in secret,” from whom, and not from men, we are to receive the glorious “reward.”

NUMBER XV

THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH, NOT A MERE SOCIETY.

Having finished the examination of the General Rules of our Church, with special reference to their authority—in their conformity or want of conformity with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures—I come now to the closing paragraph, in which there are some things of general interest and importance, and to these I wish to invite attention:

“These are the General Rules of our Societies.”

Mr. Wesley, as has already been remarked, did not contemplate the establishment of a Church. He was a member of the Church of England, and remained so while he lived. There was never such a thing as a formal separation. His object was to raise up *Societies*, and he did raise up *Societies* within the Church of which he was a member. The General Rules, which I have been considering, were designed for the government and use of those Societies. This simple fact will en-

able us to account for some things which would otherwise be inexplicable.

Had the Church of England, and subsequently the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, in its ministry and membership, and especially in its *ministry*, co-operated with the Wesleys and their co-laborers in preaching and maintaining, in opposition to the formation of the age, a purely spiritual religion, the establishment of a separate and distinct Church would not have taken place. But this, except in a few honored instances, as of Fletcher and a few others, was not done. So far from it, indeed, the ministers of that Church were the most virulent persecutors of these faithful workers in the Lord's vineyard. The legitimate result was that the "Societies" thus formed grew into a Church; and, in their associated capacity, obtained the form and name of the *Wesleyan Methodist Church*—*Methodist* because those who composed it, having been at first, *derisively* called *Methodists*, were content to retain the name *Wesleyan*, to distinguish from *Calvinistic* or other *Methodist* connections.

In our country, the establishment of a distinct Church was, from the first, a necessity, and to this necessity Mr. Wesley yielded. Being himself a presbyter in the Church of England, and in the true Scriptural sense of the term a *bishop*, he ordained, as he had a right to do, not only *ministers*, but also *superintendents*, literally *bishops*, for the newly constituted Church. I will not pause here to inquire whether or not the *constitution* of this Church was in every respect precisely in conformity with Mr. Wesley's views. Indeed, it is too late in the day to bring up this question. The *fact* of the establishment of such a Church is enough, and no one will doubt that it was established under the cognomen of the *Methodist Epis-*

copal Church. It was called *Methodist* for a reason already given. It was called *Episcopal* because its government was a modified *episcopacy*. Its *bishops*, however, were not then, are not now, constituting an "order" distinct from that of *presbyters*; but they were and are recognized, in accordance with the true import of the term, and with the Scriptural use and application of it, *superintendents*. They were not regarded then, nor at any time before the year 1844, nor are they regarded now by the Southern Church as *officers* simply of the *General Conference*, for, indeed, how could they have been so, when there existed no such ecclesiastical body as the *General Conference*, when the *episcopacy* had its origin, but as *officers*, and the *highest officers* of the *Church*. They are elected by the *elders*, and set apart for certain purposes, as to oversee the general interests of the Church, to ordain such elders and deacons as the Annual Conference may elect, and to appoint the ministers and preachers to their respective fields of labor. Their power, however, even in the last respect, is not without its proper guards and limitations.

Although that particular organization known as the *Methodist Episcopal Church*, was in name and verity a *Church*, yet the term *Societies* was still retained in the discipline. Since the division of this Church, in 1844, into two parts, the one retaining the original name, the other being distinguished by the term *South*, the Southern Division being called the *Methodist Episcopal Church, (South,)* it has, by its General Conferences expunged the term *Society* or *Societies* in most places where it occurred, and substituted that of *Church*. It is, however, still found in the General Rules, on account, most probably, of the difficulty of effecting changes in this part of our economy.

But it is time to inquire: What is a *Church*? What are the *essential notes* of a Church? What is the *difference* between a Church and a mere *Society*? What *claims* does the *Methodist Episcopal Church*, (*South*,) set up to be a Church of Christ?

In our Articles of Religion there is a definition of a Church, identical with that given by the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church, in this country, and if the controversy were with *Episcopalians* only, it would suffice to show that the M. E. Church, (*South*,) possesses all these attributes of a Church. But the object in view is more general, and we must take a wider range of thought, though still confining our views to a few of the more prominent points.

The term *Church* comes, most probably, from two words signifying the *house of the Lord*. This, however, is not the term employed in the New Testament, but it is *ecclesia*, the literal meaning of which is a *calling out*. The term was used of an assembly called together for evil purposes as well as for good. (See Acts xix., 41, where the original term is *ecclesia*.) But it was gradually restricted in its application, until it came to be wholly appropriated to a Christian assembly, as the *Church*. The very embodiment of the idea in this use of it, is that those who compose this assembly or society are called out from the world to be "a peculiar people unto the Lord."

They are distinctively recognized as the *disciples* and *followers* of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Separation* from the world is the initial idea, and it adheres to it in all its modifications, and throughout the whole of its existence, not *separation from the world*, however, in the *hermitical* or *monastic* sense of *isolation from the people of the world*, but *separation from the world*, in the sense of standing aloof from its evil doings, and of being entirely

consecrated to God. Such an assembly must, of course, be understood to hold and teach the essential doctrines and principles of the religion of Christ, and to administer His ordinances with all that of necessity pertains to them. The great end is the promotion of the glory of God in the salvation of men.

But how shall we distinguish between a *Church* and a mere *Society*? A *society* is a *voluntary association*. A person may or may not connect himself with it, as he may think proper, without any incurrance of guilt. It has the right of fixing its own terms of membership, and of making laws; not, however, in contravention of the laws of the land, but affecting the rights of membership. It may expel those who do not comply with its internal laws and regulations; though, of course, it cannot inflict any corporeal punishments. A *Church* is not a *voluntary* association, except in this one view of it, that those who enter it are required to enter it willingly. No one has the right of joining or not joining, as he may think proper, because the obligation to become connected with it rests equally upon all; and those who, in the exercise of their volition, neglect or refuse to become identified with it, incur the guilt of violating that obligation. The *Church* is a *Divine* institution. I speak not here of the Church in its integral parts, but as a whole, though every such integral part is called in the New Testament *a Church*, and as it must be modeled according to the essential principles of the Great Founder, may be said to be also divinely instituted. Its only head and law-giver is Christ, and, consequently, it has not the right of arranging its own terms of membership, or of making laws, or of making any modification in laws affecting the conscience and the privileges of membership. It

can exclude from its pales those, and those only, who are guilty of a violation of the laws of its Divine and only legislator. It may, in proper subordination to the laws of Christ, make rules or regulations for its own government, but it is not, in itself, or in any of its representatives or agencies, invested with what may be strictly regarded *powers of legislation*.

Every *Church* is a *society*; but every *society* is not a *Church*. A *Church* may be regarded as the *species* of which *society* is the *genus*. A *Church* is a particular kind of *society*. When, therefore, it is said that the *Methodist Church* is a *society*, we pass the *slur* unnoticed, for it is simply the utterance of a truth; but when it is asserted that what is called the Methodist Church is *only* a society, we cannot but demur, as the assertion embodies a fundamental error. What *essential* note or attribute of a Church, for instance, is wanting in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South? What *essential* doctrine is there which she does not firmly hold? What principle of holiness is there which she does not fully inculcate? What ordinance is there which she does not observe in all that necessarily pertains thereunto?

She holds the great Scriptural truth, that, "to us there is but one God, the Father of all, of whom are all things," and "one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things," and one "Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption," and that these three are one. She recognizes fully the doctrine of human depravity, of man's inherent proneness to evil, of his helplessness, his utter inability to recover himself from the effects of the fall, or even "to think a good thought, to speak a good word, and to perform a single good deed," only as he is Divinely assisted. She embraces in full the great system

of mediation, as effected by the sufferings and death of the Redeemer of fallen man, and extends the virtue of His atonement to the entire removal of the guilt of the original transgression, and to the salvation from sin of all who "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, with the heart unto righteousness." She endorses entirely the doctrine of justification through "the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law," of regeneration, or the renewal of the heart "in the image and likeness of God," by the transforming powers of the Holy Spirit, and of the necessity of a holy life in obedience to the will of God. She submits implicitly to the Sacred Scriptures as "the only and the sufficient rule" of faith and practice, and embraces in her creed the resurrection of the body, the great and final judgment, "the everlasting punishment" of the wicked, and "the life eternal" into which the righteous shall finally enter.

She does not, it is true, teach the imputation of Adam's guilt to the whole or any part of his posterity, for she contends that this was removed by the all-perfect sacrifice of man's representative. Nor does she inculcate the unsustained dogma of the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness to those who were "chosen in Him from the foundation of the world;" but she unfolds the Scriptural doctrine of the imputation of *faith* for righteousness in *those*, and in *those only*, but in *all* those who believe in Jesus. She departs, too, very widely from what are known as the Calvinistic views of election and predestination, and the final perseverance of the saints. There are certain great mysteries which she does not affect to uncover. They lie too deep to be fathomed by any line of human measurement, and whatever she may believe concerning them,

she does not make such belief, however important in itself, essential to salvation.

As she is correct in all the essential doctrines of Christianity, so, also, is she right in her convictions of duty. No Church more fully requires holiness of heart and life. Indeed, she goes beyond all others in enjoining holiness, a freedom from all sin, and an entire consecration to God, as necessary to continued acceptance with God in this present life, and to consummate happiness in the world to come.

She observes, too, the ordinances of God in all that is essential to their proper observance. She does not pretend to administer them precisely as Christ and His Apostles administered them, for she does not claim to know how that was. She exercises what, in the absence of any explicit directions, or of any example proposed as the model to which we must in all cases be conformed, she conceives to be her prerogative in determining the manner best adapted to the nature of these ordinances, and the ends to be subserved by them, and surely none will make what is in itself *indeterminable* an *essential note* of a Church! She retains infant baptism, but she does not insist upon it as a term of membership. She esteems it a great privilege, and every way important for parents to dedicate their children to God in baptism, but she does not make it on the part of the parent absolutely essential to Church membership.

The only objection which, perhaps, will be urged is that of her *youth*. Methodism, it has been said, is comparatively “*a thing of yesterday*,” and by what authority is it *magnified* into the *dignity* of a *Church*? But surely it must be seen that the plea of *antiquity* is of little worth. If there is any virtue in being linked on to the *past*, it can only be as that *past* is linked on to something that

could impart that *virtue*. The line of succession, whether it be of *Episcopal ordinations*, or of *regular immersions*, must be shown to be an *unbroken* one. The *episcopo-galvanic* current, or whatever else it may be denominated, must come from *hand to head*, and from *hand to head*, in a regular, uninterrupted stream, from the Saviour, in whom the virtue originally resided, or from some one of His inspired Apostles, to whom He imparted it, through the long line of *Bishops* to the present incumbent or incumbents of the Episcopal chair; or it must come through a regular series of *immersions*, down to those who claim to be in the only *Apostolic* succession. The mighty chain, in either case, must be entire, without a single break, or missing link, anywhere, throughout its whole length. A break, or the absence of a missing link anywhere would serve to vitiate the claim, and render it entirely nugatory. To give an illustration, for to be understood is all that is necessary: Let us suppose that the line can be regularly traced from A down to M; but right here there is a break—a missing link. Then N was not properly ordained or regularly baptized, and O, who received ordination or baptism from N, was unordained or unbaptized, for certainly N could not impart to O a virtue which he did not himself possess. It follows, also, that P and Q, and all the intermediate ones down to Z, the present incumbent, were unordained or unbaptized. Now can Z, whose ordination or baptism can be traced back no further than N, claim to be in the regular succession, to have been *Episcopally* ordained, and only capable of imparting the *grace* of ordination; or to have been *regularly* baptized, and only capable of administering the *ordinance* of baptism to others? It matters not how far we go back, unless we can reach, without a discon-

necting link, the *initial point*, the plea of *antiquity* is absolutely worthless

Does it require to be shown that there is no such unbroken line? The fact that all attempts to trace out one have proved an utter failure will suffice. Now, if *ordinations* of this kind, on the one hand, or of *immersions* of this character, on the other, are absolutely essential to the very being of a Church, then there is no such thing as a Church on earth, or at least, it cannot be shown that there is. Surely, Christ did not leave His Church to hold by any such *precarious* tenure; to die out at any time for the want of faithfulness on the part of those few who superintend its interests, and who could at any moment, by refusing to ordain or baptize, cause its very existence to cease, and cease forever! There must, unquestionably, be a fallacy in those views which involve this sad result.

A Church is a congregation—*society* if the term be preferred—of faithful persons, with Christ for its head only Law-giver, receiving the doctrines which He taught, enforcing the duties which He enjoined, and observing the ordinances which He ordained, with all of necessity pertaining to them. It is a matter of no importance whether it began its existence *yesterday* or a *few centuries ago*, or during the *middle ages*, or in the *times of the Apostles*. The only essential question is, does it possess the necessary attributes of a Christian Church? If so, it is a Church to all intents and purposes; but if not, no plea of antiquity can justify the title. Unless this be conceded, there can be shown to exist no Church on earth; but if this be granted, the society known as the Methodist Episcopal Church is a Church of Christ in form and verity.

NUMBER XVI.

CHRIST, THE ONLY LAW-GIVER—THE BIBLE, THE ONLY AND THE SUFFICIENT RULE—THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WRITINGS—THE GENERAL RULES, IN CONFORMITY WITH THE SCRIPTURES.

The conclusion was reached, in the last number, that the association known as the *Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, is in truth and verity, as well as in name and form, a *Church of Christ*, and not a mere *Society*. This fact, while it gives it a higher name, and entitles it to higher privileges, serves, nevertheless, as I now have occasion to remark, to restrict it in some of its privileges and actions. As a mere society, and I repeat here for the purpose of greater clearness and impressiveness, what, in substance, has been said before, it could not only frame and enact any laws or regulations, not in contravention of the laws of the land, it might think proper, but would, also, possess the right of excluding from its connection, all who refuse or fail to comply with those laws or regulations. As a *Church*, Christ is its only Head and Law-giver. He only has the right to make laws binding upon the conscience, and the *Bible* is the only exponent of those laws; the only *moral code* we have, or can have, and it is equally incapable of amendment or appeal. Christ, the Great Head, could alone fix the terms of Church membership, both as it regards entrance into His own spiritual kingdom, or continuance of connection with it. Hence, *exclusion* from the Church can only properly take place for a violation of the laws or con-

ditions of Church membership, which it pleased him to establish. This subject is of sufficient importance to elicit a more extended discussion.

I take the position, broadly and unequivocally, that no Church, properly speaking, is invested with *legislative* authority. The General Conference of our Church is familiarly spoken of, and sometimes, though unfortunately, more formally recognized, as a *legislative body*. It can be so, however, in a very subordinate sense only; so subordinate, indeed, as to be undeserving of the name. With proper submission to the authority of the Divine Head of the Church, and in entire conformity with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, it may make laws, rules—more properly *by-laws*—for the regulation of the temporal economy of the Church of which it is the representative; for the promotion of Christian enterprises; for the purpose of carrying into effect the great objects contemplated by the gospel, and for the adjustment of such questions as do not invade the sacred precincts of conscience; the invincible right of private judgment in reference to the teachings of the Sacred Scripture, and to moral questions generally; but it *can not*—MUST NOT—DARE NOT, touch any *doctrine* of Christ, or any *law of morals*, so as, in any degree, to annul or even modify it, interfere, to any extent, with the expressed or clearly implied will of the Church's only Legislator; establish any conditions of Church membership other than those, or differing from those, which He established; or impose any penalties, except those which it pleased Him to impose.

From what has been said, it indubitably appears that no person can be rightfully expelled from the Church except for violation of the laws of God, and under the restrictions given by the great Law-giver Himself. Let us take for our

illustration *non-attendance upon class-meetings*, formerly made a cause of exclusion, but not so at present. The General Conference which removed the penalty has been sometimes heavily complained of, but unjustly. That Conference did not interfere with class meetings; but left them where they were before, equally as important and valuable, as *voluntary* means of grace. The General Conference only removed the penalty resulting from the frequent and habitual neglect of attending these meetings; a penalty which no Church had a right to inflict, and which, as a consequence, no General Conference, as the representative of a Church, had any authority to impose. The General Conference, therefore, did no more than to revoke an improper, indeed, an *unauthorized* act of legislation. Mr. Wesley could, with entire propriety, exclude from his *societies*, those who were in this respect delinquents, because exclusion from his societies was not expulsion from the Church, inasmuch as he did not claim for these societies the prerogatives of a Church. Hence, those excluded from them were still members of the same Church in which Mr. Wesley himself claimed membership. Had he attempted to exclude from the *Church* for the cause just mentioned, he would have assumed a right which did not belong to him, and which no Church can legitimately claim.

It is often said, and I used to set up the same plea, that the Church is a *voluntary association*; that those who connect themselves with it do so of their own accord; that they are, or ought to be, conversant with its rules; that they voluntarily pledge themselves to keep them, and that, consequently, if they do not observe them, or “habitually break any of them,” they may, and of right, should be, excluded. This reasoning is more specious than solid. The flaw consists in

making the Church a *voluntary association*—that is, a *mere society*. If this, indeed, were the case, the reasoning would hold good throughout. But this is not true. The Church is not simply a *voluntary association*. The highest representative authorities of our Church regard it as something more, as is evident from the *expungement* of the term *society* from our book of discipline and the *substitution* of that of *Church*. The Church is a *divine* institution, having Christ for its great Head and only Lawgiver. Its laws, therefore, its terms of membership, its *penalties*, must all be in entire harmony with the principles laid down by its Divine Founder. It is not true either that a person may join or not join, as he may think proper, for he cannot stand aloof from it without incurring guilt. As it is his *duty*, so also it is his *privilege*, his *right*, to have membership in the Church, when, and so long, of course, as he complies with the laws of Christ. The Church, therefore, can have no authority to make or apply laws affecting his membership, other than those of the great Head, or to expel him from its sacred enclosure for any thing which is not positively a violation of the law of God, and, consequently, a sin against Him.

“All which we are taught of God to observe even in His written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice.”

The “*all which*” refers to “the General Rules” which had been given, though it may be regarded as too broad an expression. It is affirmed of these rules that they “are taught of God, even in His written word.” This, indeed, forms the basis of all I have written. I set out with the purpose of inquiring into the conformity or want of conformity of these rules with the teachings of God in the

Sacred Scriptures, and this purpose, I apprehend, has been sufficiently accomplished. What I wish here to notice is that important feature of Protestant Christianity: namely, that the Bible is “the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice,” so as to bring again this great principle distinctly and prominently before the mind.

In view of their manifest importance, I shall be pardoned, I think, for presenting in other terms some things which have already been mentioned. The principle now in review, and fully recognized by the same authority which set forth the General Rules, subject these rules, as I have already subjected them, to the arbitrament of the Sacred Scriptures. They are, as I wish to repeat, authoritative only as they obtain the sanction of “the Written Word.” If they, or any of them, can be shown to be at variance with the Bible teachings, they, or that portion of them, are not binding upon any man’s conscience; but if it can be shown, as I think for the most part it has been shown, that they are in harmony with those teachings, then they are binding upon the conscience of every man, of the members of all other Churches, and directly or indirectly of those who are not members of any Church, as well as of the members of our own Church.

We—and I beg leave still to dwell upon the thought, although seemingly it may subject me to the charge of tautology—we who have adopted these General Rules, and are, for this reason, considered as more particularly bound to observe them, or, as it is contended, be turned out of the Church, do not esteem ourselves fit subjects of the commiseration which has been wasted upon us; nor do we sigh, nor need any of our people sigh, for the liberty which may be supposed to

exist in Churches more tolerant of the evils here forbidden, and less punctilious in respect of the duties here enjoined. We are bound by these rules only as they are the exponents of the will of God, expressed in "His written word." The obligation to observe them does not inhere in the rules themselves, nor in the book of discipline in which they are printed, but in the infinitely higher authority of the word of God. This authority binds others—all others, as well as ourselves; and those others, as these rules are not written in their Church books, and are not formally adopted by them as a part of their Church organism, are under as strong obligations to observe them as we are in whose Church code they are found, and who have formally adopted them as a part of our Church economy, unless, as I once before remarked, it can be shown that they are not under as strong obligations to observe the principles of the Bible as we are.

"And all these we know His spirit writes in truly awakened hearts."

"*All these*," as a qualifying expression, refers, of course, to the General Rules, though, as before, it may be considered too broad. "*His spirit*," means the *Holy Spirit*, the Divine *Paraclete*, who was to "bring all things to remembrance," and *heart* signifies *mind* or *conscience*. The sinner, when made conscious of his true condition, is "*awakened*." A man when asleep is unconscious of his condition—of the dangers to which he may be exposed; hence, a careless sinner is represented as being asleep. Though full of guilt and exposed every moment to the consequences of his sins, he seems not to be aware of it; he continues on in his course as though it was nowhere written—"the soul that sinneth it shall die." He cries "peace and

safety, until sudden destruction cometh upon him." Upon a heart or mind like this the Holy Spirit "writes" nothing, for it is not capable of interpreting the hand-writing, or of being influenced by the directions given. It must first be *awakened—aroused*. The law's fulminating thunders must fall upon the ear, or other means must be employed to stir the conscience, and when the mind becomes fully awake—conscious of its guilt and danger, the Holy Spirit "*writes*" upon it "these rules"—the principles by which life is to be regulated so as to be rendered acceptable to God. It is not, however, to be inferred from this last remark that the sinner is capable of doing anything in himself; for our Church, in her Articles of Religion, teaches truly that "we have no power to do good works—pleasant and acceptable to God—without the grace of Christ preventing"—literally *coming before* or *anticipating*—"us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will:" Article viii. But it is also true that the Holy Spirit impresses the necessity of a holy life, of conformity with the will of God, upon every "truly awakened heart."

As a general truth, it is carefully to be remembered, that the Holy Spirit does not write these things, even upon "truly awakened hearts," independently of the Sacred Scriptures; for it had just been observed of "the written word," that it "is the *only* rule and the *sufficient* rule, both of our faith and practice." We must understand the meaning to be, that in reading these rules, or in thinking of these rules, and comparing them with the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit impresses upon the mind the duty and obligation of observing them, of not doing the things interdicted by them, and of doing the things enjoined. The notion that we are to be guided by impressions out-

side of the Sacred Scriptures, or that we shall be sufficiently directed as to what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do by our own conscience, or even by the Holy Spirit's teachings, without a proper study of God's written word, is a serious error, and ought to be most scrupulously guarded against. The General Rules, so far from giving any countenance to this error, call it "*an enthusiastic doctrine*," and require that we should "*trample it under foot*." The Spirit operate ordinarily through the word: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth:" John xvii., 17. When He, the Holy Comforter, whom the Father was to send in the name of the Son should come, He was to teach the disciples "all things," and to bring all things to their remembrance; but our blessed Lord added, as of great precautionary value, "*Whatsoever I have said unto you*:" John xiv., 26.

Thus we are again brought back to the question—ever present, however, to my mind—of the *accordance* or *non-accordance* of these General Rules with the Scriptures of divine truth. Always and everywhere I have sought to bring them to this touchstone. In some few, and I may say, *very* few instances, they may not have been capable of abiding the test; but generally almost *universally*, they have come out like pure gold from the furnace. In those few instances I may have differed from other authorities. I care not so long as I have been sustained by the Bible. I submit with entire reverence to the majesty of the Sacred Scriptures; but I yield to no other authority, except only as it is in harmony with "the written word." I have not even consulted other authorities, only for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning of a term, or the right interpretation of some particular passage of Holy Writ. And

now that my labors are drawing to a close, I am rejoiced to say, in this closing number but one, that in my humble judgment, in the clearest convictions of my mind, the General Rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, are, as, I think, I have shown them to be, with some few not very important exceptions, either directly or by a fair implication, in *beautiful and impressive harmony with the teachings of the "holy book divine."*

NUMBER XVII.

THE NATURE OF AN OFFENSE—METHOD OF PROCEDURE—THE RESULT—CONCLUSION.

"If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways: we will bear with him for a season; but if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us: we have delivered our own souls."

We here have the nature of an offense, under the General Rules, the manner of dealing with those who are guilty of it, and the final result.

1. The offense is, "the not observing these rules, etc., more particularly defined, the *"habitual breaking of any of them."* The phrase, "any of them," is obviously too comprehensive. It seems to me that some distinction ought to be made between *positively doing evil*, and *neglecting to do good*. At any rate, some of these rules are not so clearly

the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, as to make the violation of them the subject of the highest Church penalty; for *expulsion*, softened here into the milder expression, "*hath no more place among us*," is the end of all discipline, and the highest penalty which the Church has the power of inflicting.

It should be observed, that it is not a *single* or *occasional* violation of the rules, or any of them, which constitutes the offense as here defined; but it is an "*habitual breaking of them*." For the purpose of illustration, let us take the rule on "*Drunkenness; or drinking spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity*." *Drunkenness*, we know is a *sin*, for the Scriptures expressly so teach; but it cannot be asserted with the same degree of positiveness, that the *drinking* of spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity, is, under all circumstances, a *sin*. Let no one be unnecessarily startled! There are reasons enough in and out of the Bible to show that it is a dangerous practice, and ought not to be ventured upon or persisted in; but it is not in itself, as when it leads to no such results, a *sin*, or such an offense as would justify Church *censure*, or, at any rate, Church *exclusion*. Now, if a member of the Church indulge too freely, drink so as to become intoxicated, he is not, according to the direction, to be immediately dealt with. He may be talked to, kindly admonished, earnestly entreated; but there is no authority, even, for reporting him, as yet, to "those who watch over him." If, however, he *habitually* indulge in the use of spirituous liquors to *excess*, or, even *at all*, knowing his weakness—the impossibility of his drinking at all without drinking to excess—then there is just such an offense as is described. "If there be any among us who observe them not, who *habitually*

break any of them." This is the language; and it is very clear that it is an *habitual*, and not an *occasional* violation of these rules, which makes the offense here provided for. And yet there are to be found those who are ever ready to cry out against the preachers, or the Church, because persons, for a *single* or *occasional* violation of the rules, or any of them, are not immediately arraigned, and without proper confession, humiliation, and promise of amendment, excluded at once from the Church! I fear that "the *mote*" and "the *beam*" may find application here: Matt. vii., 3, 5.

2. The manner of procedure with those who habitually violate "these rules, or any of them," is the next thing to be considered.

It should be borne in mind, that I am not now to inquire into the method of procedure in cases of gross immoralities, as *murder, adultery, fornication, lying, stealing*, etc.; for sins of this kind are elsewhere and otherwise provided for—are made the subjects of what, for distinction's sake, (though the term is not altogether unexceptional) I might call *statutory provisions*. These gross crimes are not contemplated in the General Rules; and it is not in reference to the commission of *these*, that the method of procedure here set forth applies.

When a person "habitually breaks" one or more of these General Rules, the first step to be taken, as enunciated, is to "*make it known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account,*" that is, the pastor or preacher in charge. This, however, is to be considered only the first decisive *public* step. It is implied that antecedent to this, all proper *private* means should be employed, as private admonition, brotherly counsel and persuasion, earnest and even tearful entreaties, so as to effect, if possible, the repentance and reforma-

tion of the offender, and thus to avoid any public exposure.

But even when all this fails—and I wish to be understood that in writing this paragraph, I speak not by authority, but simply give my opinion—the offending person ought not, as a general principle, to be reported until he is duly notified of the intention to do so. There may be exceptional instances. There may be such a relationship, or state of feeling between the parties as would render it imprudent for the one to attempt to admonish the other; or it might be deemed best for the brother, who is cognizant of the offense, to consult with his loving pastor, or with some mutually sympathizing friend, as to the most judicious course to be pursued, in order to restore the delinquent member.

In reference to personal differences of altercations between brethren—I speak now by the highest of all authority, that of the Saviour Himself—there is but one method of procedure allowable, and that is this: “Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican:” Matt. xviii., 15–17. This is the law in such cases, as given by the great and only Law-giver; and it is therefore, incapable, of being amended, or in any way modified, or annulled. It is plain enough, too, and requires no word of comment.

When, to return to the former case, private ad-

monitions, brotherly counsels, kindly entreaties, all fail, and the case is brought to the notice of the pastor, or the Church, the question may well be asked: Is the delinquent member to be at once judicially dealt with and excluded? I answer, no; that is not the course pointed out; but it is this: "*We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season.*" It is not until further admonitions are given—I say *further* admonitions, because the rule does not require the offending brother to be reported at all, until his violation of the General Rules becomes "*habitual*;" and until then, I have antedated *private* admonitions, judicious counsel, brotherly entreaties, and he is borne with "*for a season*," affording time for these further admonitions to have their desired effect, that the offender, if still incorrigible, can be regularly tried and excluded from the Church. "*But if he repent not, he hath no more place among us.*" This implies that if he repent through the intervention of these final efforts to save him, he is still to retain his "*place among us.*" "*We have delivered our own souls.*" We have faithfully warned him, we have used all brotherly efforts to save him; we have done all we can, we are, therefore, clear of his blood:" Ezek. xxxiii., 9.

The *tyranny* of our Church has so often been complained of by those who are really ignorant of its economy, or who willfully misrepresent it, has been the subject of so much bitter vituperation, has been proclaimed to the world, in *books* and *periodicals*, in *fireside lecturee* and *pulpit exhibitions*, with so much of fierce denunciation, that it is not at all out of place to devote a paragraph or two to its consideration. I will say nothing here of the power of the *episcopacy* to oppress the *preachers*; for that is simply a question between

the preachers and those to whom they have consented to give this power, and whoever for there may be in this outside complaint. It does not require to be discussed here. Neither will I now say anything in respect of the right of a Church to select its own pastor; for the right of the pastor to select his own congregation is equally as well founded; but if, for what they regard as hallowed purposes, as the accomplishment of greater good, the promotion of vital godliness, the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the salvation of sinners, they have mutually conceded what may be regarded their rights in this respect, I see not how it should in any way reflect unfavorably upon them, or unfavorably affect others. It seems to me that it ought rather to be spoken in commendation of them. These questions, however, are foreign to my present object. The *tyranny*, or rather, the *alleged* tyranny of our Church in dealing with delinquent members, is that with which I am now concerned.

When a member violates any one or more of these General Rules, he may be counselled, lovingly admonished, earnestly persuaded; but he is not to be reported for correction, not even to his kind pastor, except in peculiar cases, until his violations become "*habitual*." Even then he is to be admonished and borne with, until forbearance itself ceases to be a virtue; and it is not until all proper means have been tried, and the offending person is deemed hopelessly incorrigible, that he is to judicially dealt with and excluded. Can anything be further removed from *tyranny* than this? What mother could be more kindly affectioned toward her children? could be more tender of their feelings, more jealous of their honor, more forbearing in her conduct! And when *exclusion* becomes a necessity, how mild is the expression

by which this last sad act is represented ! It is not said that he shall be *expelled* ; it is not even said that he shall be *excluded* ; but milder still, “ *he hath no more place among us, we have delivered our own souls.* ” I declare myself incapable of perceiving any course of proceeding more *mild* and *gentle*, and *forbearing*. Let therefore, the tongue of slander, in so far, at least, as this matter is concerned, be forever stilled, and let those who have heretofore brought this ungenerous charge, blush for very shame !

This after all is the true notion of *discipline*. Many seem to regard it only in its final results. They speak of *discipline* only as it is exercised in the *trial* and *suspension*, or *expulsion* of an offending member. This is, however, manifestly incorrect. To *discipline* means to *teach*, or in its application to an erring brother, to *restore*. The great Apostle of the Gentiles gives the embodiment of it when he says, “ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault ye which are spiritual, *restore* ”—literally, set the broken bone, replace the dislocated joint—“ such a one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted : ” Gal. vi., 1. The object of all proper discipline is not *expulsion*, but *restoration*. Its design is to *heal, restore*. *Expulsion* is the end of all discipline—the sad result of the *failure* of all discipline.

We may find an appropriate illustration in a *diseased arm or leg*. It matters not how badly it has been wounded, how dreadfully it may be diseased, the skillful physician will not at once take it off ; not, indeed, until the safety, the vitality of the body absolutely demand it. He will endeavor to heal up the wound—that ulcerated sore ; and as long as there is any probability of curing it he will let the limb remain. It is not until all such hope is gone, and the gangrenous limb begins to spread

the deadly virus through the whole system, endangering the person's safety or life that he decides to cut it off. So the object of *discipline* should be to *cure*; and the *knife* of *excision* should be applied only when the case becomes hopeless, or when the safety and well-being of the Church as the body ecclesiastical, actually requires it.

There are cases, I admit, where the purity of the Church will allow of no delay. These, however, arise from the commission of scandalous crimes, with regard to which a different law obtains. But, even in these cases, not now to be considered, the procedure of our Church, instead of being *oppressive*, is the most *fair*, and *honorable*, and *just*, that can well be conceived.

3. The final result: "*He hath no more place among us.*"

This is the last sad act of discipline, more properly the *end* of all discipline. And how is it to be accomplished? Obviously, it was the intention of the rule, in perfect accordance, as I think, with the Sacred Scriptures, that the minister who has the control, the pastor, or "shepherd of the sheep," should erase the name of the incorrigible offender from the roll of Church membership. But in consonance with our present economy there is but one legal way of excluding a member from the Church; and although this is a *statutory* provision, and applies to "some crime expressly forbidden in the word of God," it must apply in every case where *expulsion* is the result, and the expression "*hath no more place among us,*" is but a *softened* way of representing *expulsion*.

Proceeding in harmony with this provision, an investigating committee of three members, is first to be appointed, whose business it is to inquire whether there is sufficient evidence of an *habitual violation* of the rules, or any of them, to justify

a trial. If not, the case, for the present, ends here. If the proof is deemed sufficient to justify a trial, one of this committee shall "prepare a bill of charges and specifications," and shall "also prosecute the case." The *charge* will be an "habitual breaking" of some one or more of the General Rules of our Church; and the *specifications* will include the particular instance or instances of such violation, or violations—giving such a description of the offense, in respect of the time and place when and where committed, together with other circumstances, as will afford the accused person a fair opportunity of meeting and repelling the charge brought against him.

"Upon the presentation of such a bill of charges, the preacher shall appoint a committee of not less than five, nor more than thirteen, before whom the accused shall be duly cited to appear, who shall have power to try the case; and if the accused be found guilty by a majority of the committee, let the preacher declare him suspended or expelled." *Discipline pp. 130, 131.*

It has not been my purpose to go outside of the General Rules; nor have I done so except in considering the means by which the final result is to be reached. In reference to the charge above mentioned, it must be shown by the evidence, that it is an *habitual* breaking of the rules. It must be shown, also, that the person accused of it has been *admonished* and *borne with* "for a season." When the committee, therefore, bring in a verdict of "*Guilty*," there is presented the case in respect of which it is said, "*He shall have no more place among us*;" and the preacher in declaring him expelled, does nothing more than pronounce the *penalty of the law*.

I have now said what I intended to say on the General Rules of the Church—indeed, I have gone

beyond my original intention, as the *five* numbers I had at first in contemplation, have been increased to *sixteen*. The labor of preparation has not been without pleasure and profit to myself; and I shall be fully recompensed, if these carefully written articles shall be of benefit to others. I have sometimes indulged in repetition; but it has been merely the expression of the same thought in other words, or the presentation of it in a different light, for the purpose of being more clearly understood, and especially, of impressing some important principle. May the blessing of God rest upon these humble efforts for the promotion of His glory and the edification of His Church!